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SIR ROBERT PEEL,

AND

HIS ERA:

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BEING

A SYNOPTICAL VIEW OF THE CHIEF EVENTS
AND MEASURES OF HIS LIFE
AND TIME.

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SIR ROBERT PEEL AND HIS ERA.

CHAPTER I.

Sir Robert Peel's Parentage, and Entrance on Public Life.

"At social Industry's command,
How quick, how vast an increase! From the germ
Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced,
Here a huge town, continuous and compact,
Hiding the earth for leagues——and there,
Where not a habitation stood before,
The abodes of men irregularly massed,
Like trees in forests—spread through spacious tracts,
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun."

Wordsworth.

No man now living can venture to predict the ultimate consequences which will result from the change in our social circumstances and character effected by the rise and growth of the modern manufacturing system during the latter portion of the last century. Not only will it change the condition of England, but the character of the civilized world. Already we perceive symptoms of its mighty operation in the war of Tariffs, the foster-

ing of national manufacturing interests, the race and the struggle of the industrial powers of contending countries; while in Britain it has raised a controversy, stern and fierce, and brought about a state of things whose future development involves the existence, the character, and the nature of our social institutions.

There are great epochs in the history of the world—remarkable periods, which, like night, intervene to mark out and divide the successive days of the existence of man. Into these periods are crowded events, individuals, and discoveries, all of a startling and stupendous nature, and all working together to bring about a new era in the good and evil, the "mingled yarn" of the human race. Such a period has been the latter portion of the last century, and the first portion of the present one. The American and French revolutions, Washington, Bonaparte, and Wellington, the steam-engine and the steam-boat, canals and railroads, the secrets of chemistry laid bare by such men as Black, Priestley, Davy, Klaproth, Berzelius, and others not less illustrious, Watt and Arkwright arming us with gigantic mechanical power; and at the very moment that horrid War is draining away our population to take part in one of the most tremendous military struggles that the world has ever seen, peaceful Science covering our wastes and solitary places with the new abodes of men, and, in spite of even "the smoke of unremitting fires,"

compelling our deserts to "blossom as the rose." These are men, events, and changes destined to give a new aspect to our humanity, and to exhibit to future generations new forms of social life.

Those remarkable and busy periods are not distinguished by the presence merely of pre-eminent men, whose actions or discoveries raise them conspicuously above their fellows. They are also crowded with subordinate agents of every grade and variety of character, remarkable each in his sphere, and each working out his share in the grand result. Confining our attention exclusively to the wonderful development of our manufacturing industry, or rather the creation of our modern manufacturing system, we perceive that it was not alone that "Black taught and Watt learned," nor yet alone that Priestley or Cavendish discovered, or Arkwright contrived, and Brindley showed how a country may be brought together by intersections of water. Other men also started up, to discover, to modify discoveries, to apply them, and to conduct them to successful and triumphant conclusions. In one place appears a Jedediah Strutt, building round his mills the town of Belper; in another, David Dale, a man springing from the lowliest obscurity of life, rises into wealth, and establishes a New Lanark, noted in after times by the benevolent vagaries of his son-in-law Owen. These men were the precursors of our existing Gregs, Ashworths, and Whiteheads—individuals who, in

making fortunes, have not neglected the human agents by whom they have been made, but have tasked their attention and their ingenuity to work out the best results from the manufacturing system, and who have signally shown that human beings may be morally, intellectually, and physically happy, even though grouped together in manufacturing towns, and doomed to wear out existence in factory "beehives."

Yet it is painful to reflect on the insecurity of all this, or to be obliged to remember that the happiness which may be associated with our modern manufacturing system is like the gourd of Jonah, which "came up in a night, and perished in a night." The master manufacturer is, comparatively speaking, a despot, and the happiness of his people depends much on his personal character. In one place, a benevolent capitalist may surround his works with pretty cottages, playgrounds, and schools, and the whole aspect of his manufacturing state proclaim the reign of philanthropy; in another may be seen only huge buildings and towering chimneys, with a population whose look announces that no other bond of union or of interest links masters and men than the mere consideration of wages.

Amongst the noticeable names associated with the rise and growth of our modern manufacturing system, is that of PEEL—or PEELE, in its primitive form. The final and superfluous letter has been

long since discarded, but we find it occasionally used down to a late period; and even on the entrance of the present SIR ROBERT PEEL into public life, though the newspapers give his name in its present form, the "Parliamentary History" and the "Annual Register" announce him as *Mr. Peele:* and trifling as is the alteration, one is apt for a moment to question the identity of the individual, doubting if he be the same with the present prime minister of the empire.

The grandfather of Sir Robert Peel is said to be traditionally known in Lancashire as "Parsley Peele," from the circumstance of his having used a parsley leaf as a pattern in his first experiments in calico printing. Be this as it may, his third son, Robert Peel, became the founder of the PEEL family. The present Sir Robert thinks that his father was born at Peelfold, near Blackburn; more recent and personal inquiry throws doubt on this supposition, and affirms that Robert Peel, the great manufacturer, the member of Parliament, and the first BARONET, was born *in* Blackburn. Born, however, he was; in the year 1750, it seems; and his earlier days were passed in industrious obscurity. His first success in life was in calico printing, that now wonderful and interesting branch of our manufactures, to which has been brought the application of the most ingenious chemical research, and the nicest mechanical skill. From Blackburn Robert Peel removed to Bury, estab-

lishing print-works on an extensive scale, and ultimately embarking in the cotton spinning. Steady but rapid was his progress to wealth; not more rapid, however, than the growth of the manufacturing system itself, concerning which Sir T. F. Buxton records a marvellous anecdote, which he says he heard told to the Marquis of Normanby by a trustworthy authority. From this anecdote, it would appear that about two years ago, "the person who first imported from America a bale of cotton into this country was still alive—that the person to whom it was consigned in Liverpool was still alive—and that the custom-house officer of that place refused to admit it at the lower rate of duty because to his knowledge no cotton could be grown in America; yet that country which could grow no cotton, now, besides supplying her own demand, sends to this country annually a quantity valued at fifteen millions sterling."

Robert Peel, having acquired wealth, sought distinction. He entered Parliament, supported the Pitt ministry, was created a BARONET, and, after a long and active life, died in 1830, leaving behind him a good name and a plentiful estate.

Old Sir Robert Peel was a practical man—preeminently a practical man. Practical men differ considerably in the extent of their range. Some soar almost as high as a theoretical man, or in other words approach to the discoverer himself. They have but to get a hint, and they will work out the

hint; but to get a hint of a principle, and they not only comprehend it but seize it. But the larger number of practical men stand on a lower platform. They seldom can reach to the appreciation of a scientific principle; they have not strength of wing to rise high above the surface of every-day life, or power to ascend Mount Pisgah, and survey the "goodly land;" but they are admirably adapted for the valley below. Put your discovery into shape, and they will give it "a local habitation and a name;" hammer out your principle, and they will hammer it into practice. To be sure, Watt and Arkwright were practical men; but all inventors have not the rare faculty of being able not only to construct a theory, but to work it out in ordinary detail.

Sir Robert Peel was a practical man of the lower class: not a discoverer himself, he had quickness, energy, and tact, to apply the inventions of others to the realization of an honestly and creditably acquired fortune. His son, the prime minister, thus speaks of his father:—

"He moved in a confined sphere, and employed his talents in improving the cotton trade. He had neither wish nor opportunity of making himself acquainted with his native country, or society far removed from his native county Lancaster. I lived under his roof till I attained the age of manhood, and had many opportunities of discovering that he possessed in an eminent degree a mechani-

cal genius and a good heart. He had many sons, and placed them all in situations that they might be useful to each other. The cotton trade was preferred as best calculated to secure this object; and by habits of industry, and imparting to his offspring an intimate knowledge of the various branches of the cotton manufacture, he lived to see his children connected together in business, and by their successful exertions to become, without one exception, opulent and happy. My father may be truly said to have been the founder of our family; and he so accurately appreciated the importance of commercial wealth in a national point of view, that he was often heard to say that the gains to individuals were small, compared with the national gains arising from trade."

Old Sir Robert Peel was a profound admirer of the character of Pitt, truly and religiously believing him to have been "the pilot that weathered the storm." Practical as were his notions, carefully and successfully as he directed his numerous sons into the paths of honest industry, he yet had a strong desire that his house should produce a STATESMAN; having, as coarse Cobbett used to banter him, "a presentiment that he should found a family." On his eldest son, therefore, he fixed his shrewd eye, and resolved to make him a successor of Pitt. "I well remember," said the old man, speaking in the House of Commons, in the year 1819, when his son had achieved a part of his reputation; "I

well remember," said he, "when that near and dear relation was only a child, I observed to some friends who were standing near, that the man who discharged his duty to his country in the manner in which Mr. Pitt had done, would be most to be admired, and was most to be imitated; and I thought, at that moment, if my own life and that of my dear relation should be spared, I would one day present him to his country to follow in the same path."

Such was the feeling with respect to the future career of his son entertained by old Sir Robert Peel; and as Pitt and Fox had been each modelled from infancy as statesmen, so was the present Sir Robert Peel destined from his youth for the service of the nation. He was born at Chamber Hall, in the neighbourhood of Bury, in the year 1788; or rather, to preserve strict accuracy, he was born in a humble cottage in the neighbourhood of Chamber Hall, the father's mansion being at the period of the interesting event under repair. He was sent to Harrow school, where he was the school-fellow of Lord Byron, who was of the same age with himself; and he completed his education at Oxford, where he obtained a double first class-degree, indicating the highest proficiency in classics and mathematics. Byron thus speaks of him while he was his companion at Harrow :—

"Peel, the orator and statesman ('that was, or is,

or is to be'), was my form-fellow, and we were both at the top of our remove (a public school phrase). We were on good terms, but his brother was my intimate friend. There were always great hopes of Peel, amongst us all—masters and scholars—and he has not disappointed them. As a scholar he was greatly my superior; as a declaimer and actor, I was reckoned at least his equal; as a schoolboy, *out* of school, I was always *in* scrapes, and *he* NEVER; and *in* school, he *always* knew his lesson, and I rarely; but when I knew it, I knew it nearly as well. In general information, history, &c., &c., I think I was his superior, as well as of most boys of my standing."

Old Sir Robert Peel, having purchased the estate of Drayton Manor, in Staffordshire, near Tamworth, was for years a representative of that borough in Parliament. As soon as his son became of age, he set about getting him into Parliament also, which he effected for the borough of Cashel. This was in 1809, when the present Sir Robert Peel had turned twenty-one years of age. There were some remarkable men in the House of Commons at that time. Burke, and Pitt, and Fox had passed away; but some of their contemporaries were alive, linking the past age with the present. Tierney, Sheridan, Wilberforce, Windham, and Whitbread were amongst the most conspicuous of those who had shared the campaigns of the great leaders of the parliamentary strife of

past days, and who were now descending from the stage; while Canning was in the vigour of life and the maturity of his brilliant powers; and Huskisson was ripening into a philosophic statesman. There were other notables too. Grattan, the untiring advocate of the Catholic claims; grave, earnest Romilly, the ornament of his profession, his party, and his country; Burdett, the idol of the mob; Lord Henry Petty (the Marquis of Lansdowne); James Abercromby, afterwards the Whig Speaker of the House, and now Lord Dunfermline; Croker, of official and literary celebrity; Charles Grant (Lord Glenelg); Francis Horner; Sir Henry Parnell (late Lord Congleton); not forgetting high-souled, and in his line able Castlereagh. Brougham entered public life at the same time with Mr. Peel, as did Lord Palmerston, and Frederick Robinson, now Earl of Ripon.

The time was somewhat important, but inauspicious. The expedition to Walcheren, with its unfortunate results, had brought much odium on the ministry, of which the Duke of Portland was the head. Canning was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Castlereagh "for the Department of the War and the Colonies." Between these Secretaries a quarrel arose. Canning wished to get Castlereagh removed, and had spoken to the Duke of Portland about it; and Castlereagh accusing Canning of treachery, challenged him. They met, and Canning was wounded. Upon

this the Duke of Portland resigned, dying shortly afterwards; and the two secretaries also resigned. A reconstruction of the ministry followed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Spencer Perceval, was placed at the head of the ministry; the Marquis of Wellesley and the Earl of Liverpool replaced the duellists; and Lord Palmerston entered official life as Secretary at War.

The meeting of Parliament was eagerly desired, for the public mind was excited, and the opposition eager for an onslaught on the newly reconstructed administration, and the disastrous expedition to Walcheren. Two months before the commencement of the session, the new prime minister, Spencer Perceval, issued circulars to all the ministerial adherents, entreating their personal attendance on the 23rd of January, 1810.

On this occasion, Mr. Peel, not quite twenty-two years of age, made his bow to the public, in the flattering capacity, to a young man, of seconding the address in answer to the royal speech. He spoke with liveliness and some point; and one passage of his speech is so characteristic of the future statesman that we shall quote it:—

"England," said he, "desired neither peace nor war, but she would suffer no indignity, and would make no unbecoming concessions. With every engine of power and perfidy against us, the situation of this country had proved to Bonaparte that it was invulnerable in the very point to which

all his efforts were directed. The accounts of the exports of British manufactures would be found to exceed by several millions those of any former period. With regard to our internal condition, while France had been stripped of the flower of her youth, England had continued flourishing, and the only alteration had been the substitution of machinery for manual labour." This was spoken thirty-three years ago; the debate on the address in both Houses is described as having been exceedingly animated.

Ministers of course triumphed by a large majority; but young Peel had occasion more than once in the session to speak again on their behalf. Spencer Perceval, the prime minister, pleased with

"The Princess of Wales, accompanied by Lady Charlotte Lindsay, was present at the debate in the House of Commons. Her Royal Highness sat in what is called the *opposition gallery*, as it is over the Treasury bench, and consequently parts the principal speakers on the opposition benches. Her Royal Highness remained in the gallery while the division took place; but the Speaker would not allow the tellers to declare the numbers until the doors were shut, and he audibly pronounced 'Strangers must withdraw.' It was some time before the Princess took the hint."—*Morning Chronicle, Jan.* 25, 1810.

Ladies used to be freely admitted into the House of Commons. On the 2nd of February, 1778, they attended in great numbers, so that there was no room for "*men* strangers;" and Captain Johnstone of the navy, commonly called Governor *Johnstone*, indignant that he could not bring in some of his male acquaintance, insisted on the House being cleared of *all* strangers. The ladies, several of whom were of high rank, the Duchess of Devonshire, &c., refused to go, and gave great trouble, raising no little disturbance in clearing the House. Ladies have ever since been rigorously excluded, though the exclusion appears to have been relaxed in the above instance.

the ability which the young man displayed, made him Under Colonial Secretary, a post which he retained till he went to Ireland as Chief Secretary.

Mr. Peel had some disadvantages to overcome on entering the House of Commons. The clever men already in it occupied public attention, and Canning, with his sparkling rhetoric and graceful manner, made public speaking a high art, while Mr. Peel's speech and appearance indicated rather an elaborate mannerism than original power. Besides, he entered the House not as a professional but simply as an educated gentleman, claiming a share in public life as due to his ability and his position. A lawyer in the House of Commons has his profession to back him, if he have ability to back his profession; and an Eldon, an Erskine, a Brougham, a Lyndhurst, a Sugden, or a Campbell, are ever ready instances to be adduced, amongst a thousand, of the highest honours of the state reached from the lowest ranks of the bar. The House of Lords swarms with successful lawyers, or their descendants; there being dukes, marquises, and earls, with barons in abundance, whose honours are the fruit of legal success. Pitt, with all the *prestige* of his great father's great name, tried the law, before he became a precocious prime minister.

Different is the position of the man who enters the House of Commons simply as an educated gentleman, and demanding a share in public life as due to his abilities. His claims are narrowly

scrutinized; his connections are rigidly examined. Burke and Canning are examples of how hard it is for high genius and commanding power to maintain a place in public life without the aid of "connections;" and though the strength of this aristocratic feeling has considerably abated, it prevails effectively still.

Of course, there are exceptions to the generality of this, even in earlier times. Mr. Addington, better known as Lord Sidmouth, was the son of a country physician of note: he filled the chair of the House of Commons; and from that situation, as Speaker, he was raised by George the Third to the post of First Lord of the Treasury, on the retirement of Mr. Pitt, in 1801, on account of the king's refusal to concede the Roman Catholic claims. The Addington administration was assailed by sarcasm, especially from Canning, who sneered at "The Doctor" in poetry and prose. On being driven from office, Mr. Addington was created Viscount Sidmouth; was Home Secretary in the Liverpool administration; and in 1822, on his resignation of that office, was succeeded by Mr. Peel.

Mr. Peel was the son of a member of Parliament who had raised himself from comparative poverty by his own exertions in the path of honourable industry; and the father did not disguise the fond dream of a parent, that the son was destined to glorify the family. From an early period, there-

fore, the youthful aspirant was eyed askance; contrasted with Canning; and set down as clever mediocrity (" the sublime of mediocrity ") which would never rise above the level of official routine. Frederick Robinson, the present Earl of Ripon, was far more showy in his ability; and it was prognosticated that he would rapidly outstrip Peel. He commenced his public career as Vice-President of the Board of Trade; and, though he fluttered upward, until he hovered for a short space as premier, he is now President of the Board of Trade, in an administration of which Sir Robert Peel is the head, if not the master.

Spencer Perceval was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons, on the 11th of May, 1812. A ministerial interregnum ensued, during which the Marquis of Wellesley vainly endeavoured to form an administration. At last the Earl of Liverpool became the head of the ministry, Mr. Peel receiving the post of chief secretary for Ireland, which he filled till the year 1818, when he resigned. In 1819, as an independent member of Parliament, he was a leading agent in the legislative measure for the permanent resumption of cash payments, an account of which we proceed to give, in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

BANK RESTRICTION—RESUMPTION OF CASH PAYMENTS—"PEEL'S BILL" OF 1819.

"There is a mine for the silver,
And a bed for the gold which men refine:
Iron is dug from the earth,
And the rock poureth forth copper.
Man delveth into the region of darkness,
And examineth to the utmost limit
The stores of darkness and death-shade:
He breaketh up the veins from the matrice,
Which, though nothing thought of under the foot,
Are drawn forth, are brandished among mankind.
The earth itself poureth forth bread."—JOB.

GOLD, as it has been received from the earliest, so it is likely to be acknowledged till the latest period, as the great and universal medium of EXCHANGE amongst civilized men. Whatever aid may be derived from the junction of silver, or the assistance of copper, or other metals, gold must still retain its place as the sovereign of metals, the monarch of money, the universal standard, to which all nations must bring their transactions, and regulate, by it, their commercial intercourse. Gold, therefore, must be a prime article of import and export in all countries with a particle of foreign trade; its

value will rise and fall, like the value of other articles, according to the rate of supply and demand: but wherever intercourse is free, that value will remain tolerably steady, because those who make profit by the merchandise of bullion are ever on the watch to restore the balance by export or import.

But PAPER MONEY is a modern upstart, whose uses have hitherto blinded us to its abuses; a power which we can instantly summon to our presence and our service, but, like the novice with the enchanter's book, have hitherto shown how little able we are to control. Paper money, unlike gold, has scarcely any intrinsic value; it can be promptly and cheaply manufactured; and it has conveniences which render its use essential in the services of mercantile life. Its value is based on FAITH; its use is derived from "suspicion asleep;" and hitherto all experience has shown, that we can in no manner sustain its credit, or prevent it from doing mischief, except by effectually controlling its issue, and securing its prompt convertibility into CASH. For a BANK NOTE is a "promise to pay," taken on the faith that the man or the men who has or who have put it out, have lands, goods, ships, gold, or valuable securities with which to redeem their credit. These notes are exchanged, like gold, for labour, materials, or pleasurable enjoyment; they pass from hand to hand as payment for an equivalent in bread, meat, liquors, or other valuable considerations; but the last hand into

which they come must also have the power to reconvert the "promise to pay" into cash, or else the bank note loses its value, and a practical fraud has been committed.

We touch not on other departments of paper currency, bills of exchange, &c. That they are of enormous use in facilitating the transactions of commerce, no man doubts; that they are constantly liable to enormous abuse, almost every man has felt; and that they ought to be under some powerful check and control, no man can deny.

Three great nations have, within the last half century, felt, in tremendous force, the evils arising from the abuse of paper money. These nations are France, Britain, and the United States: France during the revolution, Britain during and after the war, and the United States at earlier and more recent periods, down to the present hour. Their experience ought to sink deep into every commercial nation the lesson which has been taught through so much suffering; a lesson which proclaims emphatically, that though paper money may be, like fire, a necessary agent and a useful servant, it is, like fire, a terrible master: as a river carefully held within embankments, it may serve as a convenient medium of transit, but when it rises as a flood, it sweeps everything valuable away exposed to its resistless fury.

This truth was impressed on the French people —at least it ought to have been—by the havoc caused by the ASSIGNATS. The revolutionary go-

vernment had confiscated the landed property of the church, but could not sell it at its value: for everything was insecure; metallic money was fast disappearing from circulation, being either carried off by fugitives, or hoarded by the timid; and men were afraid to buy or sell, except in what concerned the imperious necessities of life. To supply at once their own necessities, and to afford a circulating medium, the revolutionary government issued a kind of paper money—a species of exchequer bills—based on the security of the unsold lands of the clergy, now belonging to the state. Tempted by the convenience of such a mode of obtaining a command over what constitutes wealth, more and more of this paper money was issued, until it fell tremendously in value, and there ensued from it a more widely spread and more disastrous ruin than was produced by any other consequence of the revolution.

Burke, approaching the close of his career, but descending like a summer's sun in a blaze of glory, had his rich and vivid imagination wonderfully excited by the French revolution. He saw in it a war against order, authority, law, and property; a war against all that constitutes man a rational and a religious being; and in surveying all its atrocities and disasters, the mischiefs of the *assignats* did not escape his penetrating intellect. In his "Reflections on the French Revolution," published towards the close of 1790, a book which had a mar-

vellous influence on public opinion, he triumphantly contrasts the condition of England with the condition of France in the matter of paper money. "At present," he said, speaking of France, "the state of their treasury sinks more and more in cash, and swells more and more in fictitious representation. When so little within or without is now found but paper, the representative not of opulence but of want, the creature not of credit but of power, they imagine that our flourishing state in England is owing to bank paper, and not the bank paper to the flourishing condition of our commerce, to the solidity of our credit, *and to the total exclusion of all idea of* POWER *from any part of the transaction.* They forget that in England not one shilling of paper money of any description is received but of choice; that the whole had its origin in cash actually deposited; and that it is convertible at pleasure, in an instant, and without the smallest loss, into cash again. Our paper is of value in commerce, because in law it is of none. It is powerful on 'Change, because in Westminster Hall it is impotent. In payment of a debt of twenty shillings a creditor may refuse all the paper of the Bank of England. Nor is there among us a single public security, of any quality or nature whatsoever, that is enforced by authority. In fact, it might easily be shown, that our paper wealth, *instead of lessening the real coin,* has a tendency to increase it; that instead of being a substitute for money, it

only facilitates its entry, its exit, and its circulation; that it is the symbol of prosperity, not the badge of distress. *Never was a scarcity of cash and an exuberance of paper a subject of complaint in this nation.*"

Six years afterwards, when the fatal *assignats* had developed all their pernicious powers of mischief, Burke, in his second letter on a "Regicide Peace," assails the issuers of these "tickets of despotism" with all the strength of his indignant sarcasm. "We go about," he said, "asking when *assignats* will expire, and we laugh at the last price of them. But what signifies the fate of these *tickets* of despotism? The despotism will find despotic means of supply. They have found *the short cut to the productions of nature*, while others in pursuit of them are obliged to wind through the labyrinth of a very complicated state of society. *They seize upon the fruit of the labourer;* they seize upon the labourer himself."

Great minds are endowed with telescopic power, and their words, imbued with the prophetic instinct of genius, sometimes cast "shadows before." But in this instance Burke was so dazzled by the glare of the French revolution, that he could not see distinctly what lay at his feet. He cried out "No peace with regicides!" yet, to carry on a war with these regicides, we had to adopt a course similar to that which Burke so eloquently denounced. Even "whiles he was yet speaking," that interference of

POWER which he repudiated, took place in our paper currency; and he who so triumphantly declared that "in payment of a debt of TWENTY SHILLINGS a creditor could refuse all the paper of the Bank of England," lived—nor had he to wait long—to see a law enacted by which bank notes of twenty shillings could not be redeemed in cash—to witness the beginning of a system which reversed our position,—paper money made all-powerful in Westminster Hall, and thereby rendered comparatively "impotent" on the Exchange.

We were at war with France; the prime minister, Pitt, required large supplies of money; the Bank of England, his financial agent, grew alarmed; the rising general of the Republic, Bonaparte, was victorious in Italy; and, though Jervis, Hood, and Nelson guarded the seas, and triumphantly displayed the "meteor flag of England," Ireland was on the verge of a revolution, a French armament had attempted to land, and there were fearful rumours that thousands of armed men were ready to pour into Britain from France. Commerce was troubled; credit was shaken; prices were rising; gold was draining from the Bank; and universal uneasiness and alarm prevailed. "More money" was the cry of the prime minister; and the Bank pointed to its almost exhausted coffers. The prime minister spoke to his colleagues in privy council; they nodded assent; and an ORDER IN COUNCIL appeared, re-

straining the Bank of England from paying its notes in cash until Parliament should express its pleasure. "On the 27th of February, 1797," said Charles James Fox, speaking in the House of Commons, when the order in council came under discussion, "there was, for the first time since the revolution [1688], an act done in the king's name which has struck at the foundation of the public credit of the country, by seizing the money belonging to individuals, deposited in the public treasury of the public creditor; and afterwards withholding and refusing payment of that money."

The order in council was confirmed by an act of Parliament, but neither produced immediate disastrous consequences. The merchants of London met and declared their faith in the Bank of England, and their determination to take its notes at their declared or nominal value; the country was exhorted by every consideration of loyalty and of safety to do the same, thereby strengthening the government, and providing for the effectual defence of "happy homes and altars free." Nor were disastrous effects felt for a considerable period after the Bank restriction. The matter was indeed perfectly understood at the time. It was known to be a desperate resource for a tremendous exigency; and the act of Parliament which made Bank of England notes a "legal tender," provided for their redemption in cash within six months after the conclusion of a definitive treaty of

peace. But Parliament, having investigated into the affairs of the Bank, pronounced it a perfectly solvent institution; and immediate ease having been gotten by the Bank Restriction Act, the public suspicion lay down, and slept soundly.

The Bank Restriction Act released the gold in the country, and, on the whole, about fifteen millions in coin went abroad. But though gold was required for our armies and our allies, and was therefore exported, the state of our commercial relations caused it to come back again, in payment of balances owing to us; and so little scarcity of gold appeared, that for three years following the suspension the Bank could have resumed specie payments. But the public were satisfied, and so were the Bank directors. We were not indeed in an absolute flush of prosperity. Deficient harvests caused great misery, and raised to an excessive rate the price of provisions. But then bank-notes were flying about; even the working classes could command money more freely than they could command food; our manufactures were in the vigour of their youth—the spinning-jenny performing its first miracles, and the steam-engine achieving the first feats of its gigantic power. Merchants and manufacturers, commanding ample facilities of discount, and supplied freely with bank-notes, could afford to pay freely for services. Provisions being scarce, and money plentiful, fees, salaries, and wages rose to a high pitch; the demand for

men for our army and our navy relieved our labour market, and gave more scope to the workmen at home; army and navy contracts, in addition to the then commercial bustle, created a lively hum on the Royal Exchange; the dock-yards were busy; shipping crowded the Thames, the Mersey, and the Clyde; and all men exclaimed that the WAR and PAPER MONEY had made us prosperous. What the Government required from the Bank was not all required in gold to be sent abroad. There were contracts and other services to pay for at home, which were paid for in paper; and the Bank of England, having no fear of being called upon to pay in cash, supplied bank-notes freely. Thus the merchant got notes from the Bank, with which he paid the manufacturer, with which the manufacturer paid his men, with which the men paid the shopkeeper, with which the shopkeeper paid the merchant or the tax-gatherer, which the tax-gatherer paid into the Exchequer, and the Exchequer paid into the Bank, and the Bank issued more notes, sometimes two for one. Thus we were whirled round in a paper-mill, and all men exclaimed, Who cares for a guinea, that can get two bank-notes!

Under the Bank Restriction Act new life and activity were given to country banks of issue, who availed themselves of the circumstance that Bank of England notes were "a legal tender," and redeemed their paper with paper. Even private

individuals issued their "notes of hand" for sums as low as a few shillings; on the principle, we presume, of the player, who, finding the paper-snow-storm, under which he was to fall exhausted, was failing before the time, called up to his Jupiter, "If you can't snow white, snow brown!"

From time to time, however, something seemed to be wrong. It appeared clear on the face of a twenty-shilling note, that its value was twenty shillings; and therefore a note and a shilling were equal to a golden guinea. And yet, occasionally, even a "light" guinea, one so worn that it was under the legal denomination of twenty-one shillings, would find an eager purchaser at twenty-two shillings. Bank-notes, too, did not seem to be treated with the respect which was due to them; but hardly anybody could tell the reason. So it was, however; and it was also very remarkable, that when guineas became more valuable than bank-notes, guineas became scarcer and scarcer. Simple-minded people in the country took alarm; and though they put perfect confidence in an act of Parliament, and would have been sorry to have doubted the Bank of England, still they thought that it would not be a bad thing to have a reserve fund of guineas in an old stocking or a secret drawer, to be ready for a time of trouble; and thus the practice of HOARDING became a common one. The man who contrived to get a guinea for his labour was better paid than

the man with a twenty-shilling note and a shilling. Agents went about offering from twenty-two to twenty-seven shillings for each guinea they could get; even the Government, in order to send gold to the Peninsula, had to employ people who violated what was then the law, in gathering their golden stores. Curran, the eloquent and witty Curran, writing a letter from London in 1811, said, "Wellington has been obliged to give up Rodrigo, and retire westward; I suppose, to eat his Christmas pies at his old quarters in Torres Vedras, to which every hundred pounds that is sent him costs only one hundred and forty pounds here." Commerce was deranged; people were discontented; some made large profits, but a great number were literally defrauded by the constant fluctuation between the value of gold and the value of paper: but how to account for this state of things was the puzzle.

Occasionally rays of light struggled through the darkness: merchants wrote pamphlets; authors wrote reviews; and even a statesman, the first Earl of Liverpool (father of the well-known prime minister who was so long at the head of public affairs), exhibited an intelligence which might have enlightened the public, he having, in 1805, published, in the shape of a letter to the king, a work on the Gold Coin of the Realm, in which he pointed out the danger of our paper-money being issued in excess, and the necessity of a par-

liamentary revision of it. At last, stepping out from the obscurity of Capel Court, the temple of the money-mongers, there came one David Ricardo, a stockbroker, who afterwards became a Pharos in political economy, and was received as an authority in Parliament and by the public. His pamphlet, "The High Price of Bullion a Proof of the Depreciation of Bank Notes," burst amongst the public like a shell, and even caused the Directors of the Bank of England to look out of their windows in order to see what was the matter. At first they thought that the cause of alarm was more calculated to frighten than to hurt; but it stirred the public mind, led to huge controversy, and produced the celebrated "Bullion Committee" of 1810, of which Francis Horner was chairman.

Francis Horner was a barrister, a man of scientific mind, a contributor to the Edinburgh Review, and a member of Parliament. Taking a great and intelligent interest in the subject, he guided the investigations of the "Bullion Committee," and summed up its deliberations. Men of various grades, characters, and social positions were examined before it—including the leading Directors of the Bank of England, who stoutly asserted the full value of the Bank paper. They affirmed that there could be NO excessive issue of bank-notes, a delusion of which they might have been cured had they tried to discover the cause why sprats, when caught in over-abundance, are used for manure.

This was their doctrine: that as the Bank only discounted bills for firms of undoubted solidity, and for real commercial transactions, there could be no possible excess in the issue of bank-paper—a doctrine pregnant with the twin children Ignorance and Mischief. Nobody accused them of giving away their bank-notes to anybody that asked for them: the Bank of England is not a charity loan society. Had they not taken care to issue their notes to "firms of undoubted solidity," and, so far as they could, "for real commercial transactions," no South Sea or Mississippi bubble would have been fit to be compared with the bubble of the Bank of England, and its inconvertible paper-money: the ruin produced by the Republican *Assignats* of France would have been as nothing compared with the ruin produced by the one-pound notes of England. And it was precisely because they did take care to confine the discount of bills (the issue of bank-notes) to "firms of undoubted solidity," that the Bank gained and the public lost; and in giving out freely their cheaply manufactured and inconvertible paper-money on the credit of "real commercial transactions," they disturbed the measure of value, deranged commercial affairs, enabled one set of men to rob another set of men; and, worse than all, saddled future generations with a perpetual impost, in the shape of interest for a huge amount of the NATIONAL DEBT.

Did the Bank of England do this? Was it not rather Providence and Pitt, Honour and Necessity? National honour and national existence demand, on the part of a great people, no little sacrifice; but we are not now discussing the merit or the inevitableness of the war. It is enough for our purpose to affirm, that but for inconvertible paper-money, but for that paper-money of which the Bank Directors, in 1810, said to the Bullion Committee there could be no possible excess while its issue was limited to "firms of undoubted solidity," the people of this country might have been spared much misery arising from excessive fluctuations in their trade and commerce, and the present and future generations a heavy load in the accumulated amount of the National Debt.

Wonderful was the wordy war which the Bullion Committee created. For this subject of the currency was one of those national questions which are not taken into national consideration until a great pressure of necessity comes; and then, for a time, the national mind is so overlaid with speeches and pamphlets—so puzzled and perplexed with fallacy and counter-fallacy—so teased and tormented with truth and falsehood—that John Bull turns aside with a heavy sigh, and wishes he had not been made to think. But at last the constant agitation acts as a clarifier; the falsehood slowly subsides; and the truth, like golden fish in a glass globe, though ever varying

their apparent form, now larger, now smaller, according as they are viewed, are ever radiant, and distinctly followed in the medium through which they float.

Mr. Horner, on the 8th of May, 1811, brought forward a series of sixteen resolutions, declaring certain historical facts connected with the currency, and affirming the important truth that, "during the suspension of cash payments, it is the duty of the Directors of the Bank of England to advert to the state of the Foreign Exchanges, as well as to the price of bullion, with a view to regulate the amount of their issues." The next resolution declared that "the only certain and adequate security to be provided against an excess of paper currency, and for maintaining the relative value of the circulating medium of the realm, is the legal convertibility, upon demand, of all paper currency into lawful coin of the realm." And the sixteenth and last proposition was the important one, that "in order to revert gradually to this security, and to enforce meanwhile a due limitation of the paper of the Bank of England, as well as of all the other bank paper of the country, it is expedient to amend the act which suspends the cash-payments of the Bank, by altering the time till which the suspension shall continue, from six months after the ratification of a definitive treaty of peace, to that of two years from the present time."

These resolutions were a step out of darkness into daylight. But they did not suit the Government; they did not suit the Bank of England. The Government had great financial operations to effect, in conducting a war which became more and more expensive as it drew towards its conclusion; and money could be borrowed so easily in large sums, when it could be manufactured out of rags, without the necessity of being transmuted into gold. The Bank too, not to mention the secret but powerful influence of TEN PER CENT. dividends, knew how utterly unable they were to aid the Government *in notes payable in gold*. Therefore Nicholas Vansittart (Lord Bexley), the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, met Mr. Horner's sixteen resolutions by no less than seventeen, which gave him the advantage of one more, besides that his series covered a larger space on paper; and amongst these resolutions was the following daring flight of fancy:—"That it is the opinion of this committee, that the promissory notes of the Bank have hitherto been, and are at this time, held in public estimation to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm, and generally accepted as such in all pecuniary transactions to which such coin is lawfully applicable." But if the resolution was daring, the commentary on it was sublime. "I wish," said Mr. Vansittart, "the House to PLEDGE itself to the BELIEF that bank-notes still

are, as they have always been, equivalent to legal coin, for the internal purposes of the country, the only purposes to which they have been applicable." I wish the House to pledge itself to the belief that water will run up a hill as fast as it will run down—I wish the House to pledge itself to the belief, that an act of Parliament can make fire to freeze, and reverse the seasons! "A guinea," said Mr. Canning, "having arrived by wear at a certain degree of lightness, is at once divested by law of all its qualities of coin, and is reduced to its intrinsic value, whatever that may be, as bullion." Yet any member of the House of Commons, after "pledging" himself "to the belief that bank-notes still are, as they have always been, equivalent to legal coin," might have walked from the House into the city, and taking out a light guinea from his pocket, found an anxious customer for it at twenty-two shillings! Well might Mr. Canning exclaim, "Pledge ourselves to believe! This is perhaps more than any man ever before avowed of himself; but certainly more than any man ever openly declared his intention to exact from others. Belief is not usually matter of volition; therefore one should think it cannot reasonably be made matter of undertaking and engagement. Of all martyrs of whatever faith, I have always conceived the just praise to be, that they adhered steadfastly to a belief, founded on

sincere conviction, not that they anticipated that conviction by pledging themselves beforehand what their belief should be."

As it is always well to learn wisdom, not only from experience, but from contrast, let us turn back to the early period of the French Revolution, and to Mr. Burke. When Mr. Burke first published his "Reflections on the Revolution," the *assignats* had not run their round of mischief, but great efforts were made by the Revolutionary government to sustain their value; and thus writes Mr. Burke:—

"Mr. Necker found that the collectors of the revenue, who received in coin, paid the Treasury in *assignats*. The collectors made seven per cent. by thus receiving in money and accounting in depreciated paper. It was not very difficult to foresee that this must be inevitable. It was, however, not the less embarrassing. Mr. Necker was obliged (I believe, for a considerable part in the market of London) to buy gold and silver for the mint, which amounted to about twelve thousand pounds above the value of the commodity gained. That minister was of opinion, that whatever their secret nutritive virtue might be, the state could not live on *assignats* alone; and some real silver was necessary, particularly for the satisfaction of those who, having iron in their hands, were not likely to distinguish themselves for patience when they should perceive that whilst an increase of pay was

held out to them in real money, it was again to be fraudulently drawn back by depreciated paper. The minister, in this very natural distress, applied to the Assembly, that they should order the collectors to pay in specie what in specie they had received. It could not escape him that if the Treasury paid three per cent. for the use of a currency which should be returned seven per cent. worse than the minister issued it, such a dealing could not very greatly tend to enrich the public. The Assembly took no notice of his recommendation. They were in this dilemma—if they continued to receive the *assignats*, cash must become an alien to their Treasury; if the Treasury should refuse those paper amulets, or should discountenance them in any degree, they must destroy the credit of their sole resource. They seem then to have made their option, *and to have given some sort of credit to their paper by taking it themselves:* at the same time in their speeches they made a sort of swaggering declaration, something, I think, *above legislative competence;* that is, that there is NO DIFFERENCE in value between metallic money and their *assignats*. This was a good stout proof article of faith, pronounced under an anathema, by the venerable fathers of this philosophic synod."

This passage is indeed prophetically descriptive. Here we have an English ministry, engaged in carrying on a war, originally commenced by this very republican government of France, whose con-

duct Burke denounces, emulating the National Assembly in the matter of paper-money; and an English chancellor of the exchequer, a man devoutly attached to the Church of England, and imbued with all that horror of the French revolution which it was the business of Burke's fervid eloquence to inspire, adopting the worst policy of the worst government which ever ruined a people! For Mr. Vansittart's third resolution, to which he asked the House of Commons to "pledge its belief," was precisely an attempt to do what Burke considered "above legislative competence," namely, a solemn affirmation by the legislature, that there is NO DIFFERENCE between metallic money and a depreciated paper currency! And what a striking resemblance between the sanguinary legislators of France in 1789, and the sober, conservative majority of the House of Commons in 1811! The same words are applicable to both: each body "made a sort of swaggering declaration in their speeches," and each attempted to give "some sort of credit to their paper by taking it themselves," or at least professing to do so.

Amongst the pledgers of their belief were the PEELS, father and son. The old man pledged his belief in perfect sincerity, and maintained his pledge and his belief to the last. Not only did old Sir Robert Peel regard Pitt as the greatest minister this country ever produced, but he regarded his policy in the matter of Bank restriction as the

wisest policy ever that great man adopted. The old man had made his fortune during a truly remarkable time. He had seen the very soil becoming prolific at the touch of science, and art clothing even our bleakest districts with populous towns and a busy people. Coal and iron were lodged in ample stores within our own domain: the steam-engine and the spinning-jenny were filling the world with the products of our genius and skill. Therefore he believed that our "internal resources" were inexhaustible, and that, to call them out in endless profusion, it needed but the additional aid of an ample supply of the "circulating medium." Having faith himself, our kind-hearted, energetic, utilitarian, and contracted baronet thought that it only required faith in others; gold was unnecessary if paper would do. So to the last hour of his public life he stood firm and fast by the faith that "PITT AND PAPER MONEY" had saved this country from "becoming a colony of France," and had made us the great people we were: this he avowed even in the face of sneer and ridicule; and when his son—he whom he had fondly designed as a successor to Pitt—departed in 1819 from this cardinal point in Pitt's policy—a policy he thought not only good for Pitt's time, but good for all time—he mourned over him "more in sorrow than in anger."

The Government carried their resolutions, and "pledged" the majority of the House of Commons

to "belief" in an affront to common sense and common fact. But the country was made to feel, in more ways than one, that even a vote of Parliament cannot change the nature of things. One inconvenience arose: Lord King and some other landlords avowed their determination not to accept payment of rents unless in gold; and as the farmers exchanged their produce for paper, they could only obtain gold by submitting to a loss. Lord Stanhope brought in a bill to remedy this grievance, but ministers at first looked shy at it, for the bill was a practical and very tangible refutation of the doctrine to which the House of Commons had "pledged its belief." After much discussion, however, the bill was placed on the statute book, under the name of the Gold Coin and Bank Note Act; and the public were now warned that it was an offence, punishable by law, to pay or to accept the "current gold coin of the realm" for a "*greater* value" than its legal denomination, or to pay or accept any note of the Bank of England for a "*smaller* sum" than the sum specified on it; and also to make a tender of bank notes a sufficient tender for rent. Here was realized fully and completely that interference of "POWER" which Burke so eloquently deprecated; and vainly was it hoped that, by rendering paper money all powerful in Westminster Hall, it would remedy its comparative impotency on the Exchange.

Mr. Horner did not live to witness the legisla-

tive triumph of sound principles on the subject of the currency: he died in 1817. He, however, saw the process of restoration commenced. After the peace of 1814, the Bank of England pleaded that it had made no preparation for a change of system; and as the Government still required its aid, a respite was granted till 1816. In 1817 the Bank commenced the redemption of its notes in gold; but the drain became so rapid, that it obtained another respite, pending the final settlement of the question. One cause of the drainage was an extensive exportation of our new gold coinage to France, where it was converted into louis d'ors.

Mr. Peel resigned the office of chief secretary of Ireland, which he had held from 1812 till 1818; and being an independent member of Parliament (usually supporting the ministry) he was chosen chairman of the committee whose investigations in 1819 led to "Peel's Bill." In bringing forward the resolutions on which this bill was founded, Mr. Peel avowed the change in his opinions since he had "pledged his belief" in 1811. "I am ready," he said, "to avow, without either shame or remorse, that I went into the inquiry with a very different opinion from that which I at present entertain: for my views of the subject were most materially different when I voted against the resolutions brought forward in 1811 by Mr. Horner, as the chairman of the Bullion Committee. Hav-

ing gone into this inquiry, I determined to dismiss all former impressions that I might have received, and to obliterate from my memory the vote which I had given some years since, when the same subject was discussed," &c. &c.

"Peel's Act," passed in 1819, provided for the gradual resumption of cash payments by the Bank of England. The Bank anticipated its operation, and commenced the payment of its notes in specie on the 1st of May, 1821. The act of 1819 was a measure essentially required by every consideration of public duty, and by the dictates of common sense as well as of common safety. It no doubt inflicted some temporary inconvenience; and those who had contracted obligations in a redundant paper currency, and had to fulfil them in a currency rectified by its convertibility into gold, suffered some damage. Tooke, a very sufficient authority, estimates that from 1797 to 1814 necessaries advanced in price from 50 to 100 per cent. and that there has been even a greater fall. But the great fall in prices must be traced to more potent causes than "Peel's Bill;" the restriction of cash payments only *aided* the great rise in prices, and contributed to sustain them, but it was not the primary *cause* of the rise. In like manner, though the resumption of cash payments in some degree helped the fall of prices, and has contributed to keep them lower than during the war, it was not the primary *cause* of the fall.

Mr. Peel, however, was subjected to much opprobrium from people who attributed to "Peel's Bill" the most exaggerated effects. One of the most violent of his censors was Cobbett, who had all his life been abusing paper money, and who, so far back as 1810, wrote in Newgate, where he was imprisoned at the time, a series of letters on paper and gold. But Cobbett, though he *abused* paper money, did not understand its *uses:* he called it a sign of *debt;* and no doubt inconvertible paper money enabled the government to add prodigiously to our National Debt. Cobbett also staked his existence on a prophecy which he uttered almost weekly, that a return to cash payments would, with our load of debt, swamp the country. He had always railed at old Sir Robert Peel; but the disappointment of his prophecy aggravated his spleen against the son. Having got into Parliament, he brought forward on the 16th of May, 1833 (fourteen years after the passing of "Peel's Bill"), a very long resolution, or rather a string of resolutions, setting forth the mischiefs which, he said, had arisen from the resumption of cash payments, and asking the House of Commons to address the throne, in order to get Sir Robert Peel, as the author of the Cash Payment Act, *dismissed* from the privy council. Cobbett was seconded by John Fielden, the great cotton-manufacturer of Oldham, through whose influence Cobbett had been returned for that borough. Mr. Fielden is still in

Parliament, where he is much respected for his kind, humane, worthy character, but where the peculiar narrowness of many of his views, and the obstinacy of his disposition, deprive him of weight or influence.

The reply of Sir Robert Peel to the charges of Cobbett was animated and dignified, and made a great impression in the House of Commons, and on the country. Alluding to Cobbett's perpetual prophecies of an approaching national bankruptcy, he exclaimed "God forbid that the honourable member's speculations on the subject of 'public confusion' should be realized! He laboured under no apprehension that they would. He felt confident, whatever might be the political differences that divided public men, that all who were interested in the upholding of law and property would unite in their defence and put down such attempts. Not only would it be the greatest calamity, but a calamity embittered by the greatest disgrace, to live under such an ignoble tyranny as this:

'Come the eleventh plague, rather than this should be;
Come sink us rather in the sea;
Come rather pestilence and reap us down;
Come God's sword rather than our own.
Let rather Roman come again,
Or Saxon, Norman, or the Dane.
In all the bonds we ever bore,
We grieved, we sigh'd, we wept; we never blush'd before.'

But blush indeed we shall, if we submit to this base and vulgar domination; and I, for one,

when I read these comments of the honourable member, and consider his present motion, that I have been selected as an object of attack for the purpose of discouraging resistance to the insidious efforts which the honourable gentleman is daily making to weaken the foundations of property, and the authority of the law, I will at least preserve myself from the reproach of having furthered the object he has in view by any symptom of intimidation or submission."

The motion of Cobbett, having been seconded, was necessarily placed on the minutes of the proceedings of the House of Commons; but the House marked its sense of his conduct by adopting, on the motion of Lord Althorp (Earl Spencer), the almost unprecedented course of causing the motion to be erased from the Journals.

With the resumption of cash payments, all bank notes of a lower denomination than five pounds were gradually removed from circulation—a measure which it was intended to extend to Scotland. The Scotch bankers, however, aided by the powerful pen of Sir Walter Scott, under the signature of Malachi Malagrowther, compelled the abandonment of this part of the design.

The principle of a currency resting on a metallic basis—or, in other words, the issue of paper money, on the distinct provision of its instant conversion into cash at the will of the holder—is now distinctly recognised as a prime element of national

honour and security. Perhaps Sir Robert Peel will yet complete his financial reputation by some measure which will place the issue of paper money on a more solid basis, and under more effectual control than at present; though its present management is a vast improvement on the past—to which we owe thanks to the better views which prevailed when the Bank Charter was renewed.

CHAPTER III.

CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION.

"Stern o'er each bosom Reason holds her state,
With daring aims, irregularly great;
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by;
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
By forms unfashion'd, fresh from Nature's hand,
Fierce in their native hardiness of soul,
True to imagined right, above control."—GOLDSMITH.

"Th' applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes."—GRAY.

"The real ground on which these religious exclusions were, and always have been, defended, is that of terror; terror, lest the inferior sect, by obtaining political power, should, after a struggle for equality, contend at last for superiority."—SMYTH.

THIRTEEN years have passed since CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION was carried; and in that short period so great has been the change in the whole tone, character, and current of public opinion, that the whole of the existing generation now under thirty years of age can but imperfectly understand what was the state of public feeling, and the con-

dition of social life, before Roman Catholics were admitted to a participation in civil rights and privileges. We can understand, in this country, somewhat of the power of those prejudices which separate white men and men of colour; but we must go to the United States—not merely the slave-holding, but the free states—fairly to feel the strength of those prejudices in the repulsion which prevails between whites and blacks. So, though we may in some measure understand the nature of the antagonism between Protestants and Roman Catholics, we must have reached the years of discretion some fifteen or twenty years ago, and have visited Ireland at that time, to comprehend the intensity, the height, depth, and power, of all the scorn, contempt, hatred, and enmity which prevailed between "Protestant" and "Papist."

The young mind, looking back from the present to the past history of the "Catholic Question," is apt to fall into a very natural mistake. He surveys the Penal Code, and is startled at what Burke termed its "*vicious* PERFECTION;" he glances at the long list of illustrious names, whose noblest eloquence and enduring exertions were dedicated to the cause; and feeling in his own mind that that cause was neither more nor less than one based on justice and expediency (justice involves expediency), he will conclude that CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION was pre-eminently a *popular* question, resisted only by the selfish, the calculating, the nar-

row-minded, and the bigots; that emancipation was resisted, because "on the side of the oppressor there was power;" and that the cause of the oppressed, pleaded by eloquence, and urged with ardour, carried with it the sympathies of the vast mass of the community. No greater mistake than this can be committed. It is true that Burke poured his full soul into the advocacy of the Catholic claims; that Grattan, in his own words, uttered towards the close of his career, could proudly boast of having clung to the question with "desperate fidelity;" that Curran made the courts of justice to ring with his impassioned pleadings; that Pitt, the lofty statesman, tried to blot out the odium of the Catholic disabilities from the statute book, and abandoned power because he could not; that Fox, and Erskine, and Windham, and Plunket, and Romilly, and Mackintosh, and Brougham, and others worthy of association with them, directed all that pathos, wit, prudence, remonstrance, and indignation could clothe, either in lofty argumentation or in eloquent phrase, to win over the public mind; while Canning, the brilliant and graceful Canning, may be said to have perished in the cause. Nay, more, the question was no mere question of what was called Toryism. Besides Pitt, not a few of those who ranked themselves amongst the most rigid Tories, were favourable to Catholic Emancipation: as Castlereagh, whose name, towards the close of his life more particularly,

was the public symbol for whatever was considered despotic or atrocious in Toryism.

In spite of all this, Catholic Emancipation was emphatically an *unpopular* question: the bulk of the upper classes were against it, the bulk of the middle classes, and the great body of the working population. Nor was it unpopular merely amongst the majority of those attached to the Established Church, and to whom selfish motives and selfish fears might be attributed. There was a minority of the Dissenting body which steadily advocated and supported Catholic Emancipation, and gave the question no unavailing support. But the majority of the Dissenters was as steadily opposed to the removal of the disabilities of the Roman Catholics as the staunchest member of the Church: Dissenters who regarded the Establishment with coldness, if not with aversion, heartily coincided with it in resisting the Catholic claims. This spirit of united opposition continued strong even till the year 1829; and though by that time the minority had gathered strength, and public opinion had become considerably enlightened, the rage which pursued Sir Robert Peel after he had carried Catholic Emancipation arose not simply or alone from the disappointment of the "dominant party," but because he had abandoned the *popular*, and had carried the *unpopular* view of the question.

Here another mistake may arise. Seeing how steadily the great bulk of the people of Great Bri-

tain opposed concessions to the Roman Catholics, it may be hastily concluded that their opposition arose from the grossest prejudice, the densest ignorance, the basest bigotry, that could possibly actuate a people; that, in short, our grandfathers and fathers, whether Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Independents or Baptists, were, on the whole, a very stupid, a very ignorant, and a very cowardly and selfish race. Some colour to such a notion may be derived from the Protestant riots of 1780, when London was sacked by a brutal and barbarous mob, gathered together at the instigation of a madman; when Parliament was bearded, its sittings almost suspended, and the civil authority prostrated, before a savage and besotted "No Popery" horde. And still further countenance may be obtained to the notion, from a glance at the state of Ireland; where members of exclusive corporations trampled on the social rights of their fellow-citizens, and forgot the Christianity of which they boasted; where the Orangeman, bragging at once of his Bible and his sword, placed the Bible high on his shelf, but kept his sword by his side, and rushing out, stirred up his passions with party tunes, and drowned sober reflection with party toasts. These, indeed, are sad spectacles; exhibiting human nature in one of its lowest and most revolting aspects, where men, in a state of savage exultation, treat the awful BEING of whom the Bible speaks, as if he were of a lower rank than a pagan deity, ready

to come down and share in the foul orgies of the wretched creatures who insult Him.

But it would be a prodigious blunder—a mistake arising from ignorance and folly—to attribute the aversion to "Popery" of the people of Great Britain to a source so low as mere prejudice and selfishness. The aversion of the great bulk of our population to Roman Catholicism—or, to use their own expressive, though, perhaps, not very civil phrase, to "Popery"—arose from no lower and no less sublime a motive than a deep and reverent conviction of religious truth and duty. The Reformation taught them to regard "Popery" as that "Man of Sin" spoken of in the New Testament; and the Pope as the ever-living type of that "Son of Perdition" who, in daring insult to the Majesty of Heaven, "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." This view of the character and nature of Popery was expounded by profound learning, enforced by deep-toned eloquence, and maintained in the midst of suffering, deprivation, and sorrow; our more modern literature, in some of its loftiest and grandest forms, was imbued with the fear and the dread of Popery; our language became almost consecrated to the expression of that fear; the whole moral and mental atmosphere of Englishmen was pervaded by aversion to Popery. Associated with the view of its awful cri-

minality, was the belief in its prophesied doom. Its destiny was to be "consumed with the spirit of God's mouth, and to be destroyed with the brightness of His coming;" and what Protestant, at all partaking of the fervent spirit of early Protestantism, could possibly have communion with that system and creed, "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders?" But it was not alone the character or the doom of "Popery" which created the deep-rooted aversion of the Protestants of Britain. The Church of Rome was believed to be typified by the "Beast, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his head the name of blasphemy." Or, under another form, it was "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth." To this awful power it was given "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and dominion was given to it over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The Beast was to receive "a deadly wound," but the "deadly wound was to be healed;" in other words, Popery was to be humbled (by the Reformation), but was once more to raise itself anew before its final doom. Every serious Protestant believed in this view; and what devout man could be guilty of aiding in the revivification of a power

which was once more to make a vigorous but short-lived effort to regain its dominion over the bodies and souls of men? This was the inspiring source of that aversion to "Popery" which for three centuries was a prime moving principle in the feelings, the actions, and the policy of the majority of the people of Great Britain; an aversion which, if strong in an Episcopalian, was far stronger in a Presbyterian; and of which all our Protestant Dissenting sects, with but few exceptions, have largely and deeply partaken.

Springing out of this religious feeling, and incorporated with it, was the dread of Popery as an enemy of all freedom of intellect, and all rational civil liberty. The past history of the Roman Catholic system amply justified such a fear. From the Reformation down to the Revolution of 1688 there was a perpetual struggle between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, the one principle striving to regain its political ascendancy, the other resisting, and endeavouring to keep its antagonist down. Under Cromwell, not only "Popery," but even the Church of England, appeared utterly prostrated; but at the restoration of Charles the Second, Roman Catholicism once more attempted to raise its head from under the fearful proscription with which it was overlaid. "Clarendon relates of Charles the Second, that he came to him one day when they were both together in exile, and asked him with some astonishment whether the

penal statutes against the Catholics in England could possibly be such as they had been represented to him in conversation. The Chancellor was obliged to confess to him that they really were, and to endeavour to explain to him how and why penal statutes of this nature had been made. But it is probable that the humanity of the young king, not trained up under the discipline of polemical warfare, received an impression in favour of the Roman Catholics, careless as he was, which could never afterwards be removed. It is at the same time to be observed that Charles was totally incapable of all severer virtue, and therefore that he recoiled from any description of religion which insisted on the purity of the heart and the triumphs of self-denial. Yet was his understanding too penetrating to leave him undisturbed in the indulgence of his vices: he was therefore placed, as sometimes happens, within the reach of the two extremes of infidelity and superstition; and in his hours of gaiety believing nothing, and believing everything on the contrary during those cold visitations of melancholy to which men of pleasure are so peculiarly exposed, he was, from the first, a fit subject for the influence of the ceremonies and pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church. And from these and other considerations it may be concluded that he came to England, and remained to his death, perfectly disposed to extend every kindness to the members of a Church with

the sentiments, at least, of whose religion he could sympathise, and to whose communion, therefore (for religious inquiry into doctrines was out of the question), he must have appeared to himself to belong.

"The king, therefore, and the Roman Catholics, saw with pleasure the Presbyterians totally excluded from the Establishment (on the Restoration), because they conceived that the greater were the numbers of those without the pale, the better would be their treatment; and that the Papists might thus come in with the rest to partake of the benefits of some general act of toleration.

"The Presbyterians, on the contrary, intolerant to a degree that would be perfectly ludicrous if it were not for the serious nature of the subject, though they were extremely exasperated when they found themselves so much abhorred by the Church of England, could cordially unite with that Church in at least equally abominating those of the Roman Catholic communion.

"The Church, in the mean time, had perfectly resolved to avoid all fellowship with either. As, however, beneath the lowest deep there was yet a lower deep, they were always ready to accept the services of the Presbyterians against their common enemy, the Roman Catholics; so that in this respect the Church and the Presbyterians were united. But still further to perplex the scene, the Church of England had, like the Church

of Rome, adopted the tenet of passive obedience, and was thus *politically* united with the Roman Catholics; and therefore in this manner both were combined against the Presbyterians.

"After all the contests, therefore, which had taken place between the Papists and the Protestants, and between the different sects of the Protestants, and after so many years of civil and religious dispute, the prospect was still heavy with clouds; the civil and religious liberties of the country were still in a situation of trial and uncertainty; and they might have been for ever destroyed by the entire success of any one of the great parties of the state, or even of some of their particular combinations." *

But if Charles the Second had not been a worthless scoundrel, and his brother, James the Second, a selfish and stupid fool, the strong probability is, that these contending parties might have been evenly balanced, that moderate opinions might have gradually prevailed, that we might have been spared the Revolution of 1688, that the penal code subsequently enacted might not have disgraced our Statute Book, that Ireland might have become prosperous at a comparatively early period, and that there would have been no field, and therefore no occasion, for the Grattans, the Currans, the O'Connells, and the Sheils. But

* Smyth's Lectures on Modern History.

Charles the Second, by his heartless profligacy, his selfish cunning, and his disgraceful career, and James the Second, by his stupid war with the civil liberties of the country, once more stirred up from its profoundest depths the religious horror of Popery which pervaded the nation, and engrained in the mind of the people that the "Man of Sin" was the parent not only of every religious error, but of every social crime. Charles and James were the secret, needy, and greedy pensioners of France; by one secret treaty "Charles was to get two hundred thousand pounds for declaring himself a Roman Catholic, was to receive eight hundred thousand pounds per annum during the Dutch war, and was to be assisted with troops if his subjects rebelled, which was called being 'engaged in domestic wars.'" His conduct united all classes of his subjects against the Roman Catholics, whom they regarded as the inveterate foes of their religious and civil liberties. "That very remarkable provision of law," says Smyth, "called the Test Act, was the consequence of the very singular times of Charles the Second—times when the reigning monarch was believed to be in a conspiracy against his subjects, and the immediate heir to the crown an enemy to their religion. By this act all were excluded from civil offices who took not the Sacrament after the manner of the Church of England. 'And this religious part of the test was contrived as the only expedient for

incapacitating the Papists, against whom the act was directed. The intention of the Legislature was considerably answered. The Duke of York and other conscientious Roman Catholics resigned their posts, though unprincipled men probably retained them." The Dissenters, in their aversion to Popery, supported the bill, thinking that, so far as they were concerned, it would prove only temporary. "Great pains," says Burnet, "were taken by the court to divert this bill: the court proposed that some regard might be had to Protestant Dissenters. By this means they hoped to have set them and the Church party into new heats, for now all were united against Popery. Love, who served for the city of London, and was himself a Dissenter, saw what ill effects any such quarrels might have; so he moved that an effectual security might be found against Popery, and that nothing might interpose till that was done: when that was over, then they would try to deserve some favour; but at present they were willing to be under the severity of the laws, rather than clog a more necessary work with their concerns." If this was a zealous spirit, it was at least a self-denying zeal: the Dissenters, in their hostility to Popery, saddled themselves with a disability which was not thrown off till immediately preceding Catholic Emancipation.

The history of James the Second is known to every reader. He began with a show of tolera-

tion, but he ended with a violation of every rule of public prudence, as well as of law; until he laid rough hands on the Church of England, when it turned upon him, and the crown dropped from his head. The Church of England was deeply imbued with the doctrine of divine right and passive obedience; the king was the "Lord's anointed," whose person and authority were sacred. Yet "Popery and arbitrary power" roused even passive obedience, and caused its professors to trample on divine right: the Prince of Orange came over; and the Revolution of 1688 was accomplished.

Yet even afterwards James proved an evil genius for his own religion, and for all of his old subjects who professed it. Had he not attempted, by the aid of Ireland, to recover his throne, we might possibly have been spared at least much of the Penal Code; and, in spite of the spirit of the British people, which led them now, even more than ever, to abhor "Popery and arbitrary power," Ireland and Roman Catholics might not have endured so bitter and grievous a yoke as they have borne.

By the treaty of Limerick, the relics of James's troops in Ireland laid down their arms on condition that the Catholics should enjoy the same religious privileges as they had enjoyed under Charles the Second. This treaty was violated. The triumphant party in Ireland dreaded future

investigations into the titles by which forfeited estates were held; and they feared that if the Roman Catholics ever held up their heads again, they might have influence enough to obtain inquiry. The forfeitures during the civil wars of the Protectorate amounted to nearly eight million acres: the forfeitures that arose out of the war between William and James amounted to upwards of one million. SELFISHNESS in Ireland whispered to the RELIGIOUS and POLITICAL FEAR of England that there was no safety for religious and civil liberty but in the *extinction* of Popery; and thus began the enactment of our modern PENAL CODE. In every reign, from William the Third down to George the Third, some additional enactment was added to a body of law which seemed to become more severe as it appeared to be ineffectual for its purpose. One is reluctant to go over the details of the Penal Code; a single statement might suffice: "in Burns' Ecclesiastical Law," says Pitt's biographer, "seventy pages are occupied in an enumeration of the penal laws in force against Papists." These laws, in the language of Burke, "divided the nation into two distinct bodies, without common interest, sympathy, or connexion. One of these bodies was to possess *all* the franchise, *all* the property, *all* the education: the other was to be composed of drawers of water and cutters of turf for them." The Roman Catholic clergy of every grade were ordered out of the

country, and not to return, under extreme penalties. Popish education was prohibited; Popish schoolmasters proscribed; the possession of property by Papists rendered hazardous and insecure. No Protestant could marry a Papist. The children of Papists were bribed to become ingrates, by the legal promise of their parents' property on the condition of conforming. Lawyers could not take a Papist into their employment; and a lawyer, marrying a Papist, was disqualified from following his profession. Every office was effectually barred against Papists; the law did not even presume a Papist to be in the kingdom. *Ex pede Herculem:* from the foot judge the bulk of the body. These laws were obtained by Irish SELFISHNESS from English RELIGIOUS FEAR; religious fear truly and earnestly wished to "discourage the growth of Popery," as inimical to religious and civil liberty, to temporal and eternal welfare. But Irish selfishness perverted the penal code into the maintenance of PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY, of which, says Burke, "in plain old English, as they apply it, it signifies pride and dominion on the one part of the relation, and on the other subserviency and contempt." All who could escape from the operation of such a system did so: it has been stated on the authority of records in the military offices at Paris, that between 1691 and 1745 no fewer than 450,000 Irishmen died in the service of France.

Gradually it was perceived, though slowly and reluctantly, that the Penal Code was not only ineffective in extinguishing Popery, but too dear a price to pay for the privilege "of one set of people in Ireland to consider themselves as the sole citizens in the republic, and to keep a dominion over the rest by reducing them to absolute slavery under a military power." For a few of the calmer and more rational began, with Burke, to see that "a great part of the mischiefs that vex the world arise from words. People soon forget the meaning, but the impression and the passion remain. The word Protestant is the charm that locks up in the dungeon of servitude three millions of people." Gradually the worst portions of the Penal Code were repealed. Popish clergymen and schoolmasters were freed, on certain conditions, from the penalties which had been suspended over them; Papists were allowed to hold landed property; and other slight relaxations were ventured on, by which a Papist was recognised as a human being, even if he were still regarded as an inferior one.

Now commenced the dramatic interlude of Irish Independence, which began with a shower of fireworks, and ended in darkness and rebellion. The Irish Parliament had been reduced, by an act of the reign of George the First, into a dependent position—a kind of registering office; the English Parliament was declared to be perfectly

competent to make laws for Ireland. But the great struggle between Britain and her American colonies, which ended in the independence of the United States, had a powerful effect on the Irish; the war deprived Ireland of troops for her defence against the fleets of France and Spain; while the spirit which animated the Americans set Irish hearts a beating. Up started Grattan, that curious but honest and enthusiastic man, whose first vote was given against the cause to which his after life was dedicated. "There is a young man got into Parliament," said Lord Tyrawley at Lord Kenmare's table, in Killarney, in 1779, "of the name of Grattan. He is sent in by Lord Charlemont; and, at the desire of his patron, voted against you: but in future you will have him with you; and he will be a powerful champion in your cause." The lord lieutenant signified that there were no troops in the country with which to defend it from foreign invasion; the people must defend themselves. The hint was instantly taken; the "Volunteers" rushed forward, armed, and counting their tens of thousands; and Grattan, in Parliament, gave the signal for the assertion of Irish independence. "If I had lived," said he, "when the 9th of William took away the woollen manufacture, or when the 6th of George the First declared this country to be dependent, and subject to laws to be enacted by the Parliament of England, I should have made a covenant with my own

conscience to seize the first moment of rescuing my country from the ignominy of such acts of power; or if I had a son, I should have administered to him an oath that he would consider himself as a person separate and set apart for the discharge of so important a duty." The English government yielded to a demand backed by a people with arms in their hands; and the Irish Parliament was set free from the domination of the English Parliament. The spirit of patriotism may be said to have expired with its triumph: intrigue, disunion, and discontent paved the way for those series of treasonable efforts on the part of individuals, whose path was tracked by government spies, and whose trials called forth the impassioned, exaggerated, yet startling eloquence of Curran. Fancy the mercurial little man in the Court on such occasions as the trial of Hamilton Rowan; his naturally mean features lit up with the fervid glow of enthusiasm; his little body swelling and expanding, as if his soul were electric. "I speak in the spirit of the British law, which makes liberty commensurate with, and inseparable from, British soil; which proclaims even to the stranger and the sojourner, the moment he sets his foot upon British earth, that the ground on which he treads is holy, and consecrated by the genius of universal emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced—no matter what complexion incom-

patible with freedom an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon him—no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down—no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of Slavery : the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the god sink together in the dust ; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains, that burst from around him ; and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation."

In the history of the question of Catholic Emancipation nothing is so striking as the evils which resulted from *partial* relaxations. This was pointed out by Grattan, in 1793, in the Irish House of Commons. "There have been," he said, "three policies observed with respect to the Catholics. The first was that of Cromwell—extermination by the sword! The second was that of Anne—extermination by operation of the laws! And the third was yours—which allowed them a qualified existence! Though the two former were cruel, yet both were consistent. They both considered Papists as criminals, and exercised over them the right of conquest. They considered the Catholics as a body who were neither to have power, nor property, nor any public existence in your country. The laws of Ireland prevented them from acquiring property in land, and the usurpations of England prevented either

them or the Protestants from acquiring any considerable property by commerce. But the third policy, much milder than either, is more extravagant than both—your policy. You allow them schools, seminaries, and colleges, but distinct from our own; marriage, but marriage attended with pains and penalties; a free trade without franchise, and land without a vote." This was in the debate on the bill for extending the Parliamentary franchise to Roman Catholics; a bill which the famous Dr. Duigenan opposed, saying that if it passed, he would "fly to England for refuge;" and which also was opposed by the Speaker (Mr. Foster), who contended that if the Roman Catholics were admitted to the elective franchise, they must be admitted to the right of representation; and the ultimate consequence would be the overthrow of the Protestant Church, the dethronement of the House of Hanover, and a total separation from Great Britain.

The bill passed: Roman Catholics were admitted to share in the privilege of electing Protestant members of Parliament; and Protestant landlords, in the gratification of their selfishness and ambition, had now no reason to care how many Roman Catholic electors were on their estates, provided their votes were secure. But this new concession infused fresh bitterness into the hatred which prevailed. The Protestants scowled on their new competitors for the occupa-

tion of land; and the Roman Catholics, beginning to feel themselves of some little importance, repaid deeper contempt with bitterer passion. It was this growing spirit of still stronger and fiercer mutual aversion which aggravated the horrors of the Rebellion of 1798, and led to the retaliatory shootings and murders of that disastrous period.

The Irish Rebellion of 1798 was followed by the Union. The Irish Parliament was extinguished, though not, bad as it was, without its having done more than one good thing, of which one was the establishment of Maynooth College. Amongst other matters of the Penal Code which received Burke's indignant vituperation was, naturally enough, that part of it which proscribed Roman Catholic education; and, in 1782, when a good natured proposal was made to erect a few sizarships in Trinity College for the education of Roman Catholic clergymen, he exclaimed against it as utterly inadequate, comparing it to "feeding a Gentoo with beef broth, and fomenting his wounds with brandy." For, he said, "when everything liberal is withheld, and only that which is servile is permitted, it is easy to conceive upon what footing they must be in such a place." Grattan took an active and prominent part in the establishment of Maynooth College by the Irish Parliament; the object of the institution being to encourage feelings of attachment to country, as well as promoting education, by giving facilities for educating priests

at home. Burke, writing in 1795 to Baron Smith, says, "Surely Great Britain and Ireland ought to join in wreathing a never-fading garland for the head of Grattan."

Pitt abandoned office in 1801, on account of George the Third's determination to resist the Catholic claims, which Pitt had pledged himself to carry, as a consequence following the Union. The history of every subsequent administration up till 1829 was more or less connected with this question, in its acceptance or rejection of office. But the French Revolution had a powerful influence on English public opinion relative to Catholic Emancipation. Before that event, a very liberal spirit—a latitudinarian spirit—was growing up, even amongst Roman Catholics. Dr. Alexander Geddes, the well-known Scotch Roman Catholic priest, the author of a translation of the Bible, with commentary, and of an "Apology for the Roman Catholics," was, in general respects, the mouth-piece or interpreter of the neological Roman Catholic party; but though a learned and worthy man, he was disclaimed as not being orthodox by the great body of his brethren. The party, however, to which he belonged created considerable dissension in the Roman Catholic body, by applying to Parliament for relief, in their capacity of "Catholic *dissenters*;" their petition and bill being supported by Pitt, Fox, Burke, &c. In their petition they disclaimed, perhaps more ener-

getically than the high authorities of the Church (the continental universities in 1789, and the Pope in 1791), the doctrines imputed to the Roman Catholic Church, and which were the cause of so much real as well as assumed alarm amongst Protestants; namely, that no faith is to be kept with heretics, that excommunicated princes may be deposed or put to death, that the Pope can absolve from secular obedience, and so forth. But the French Revolution checked the farther progress of this latitudinarian spirit amongst the Roman Catholics of Britain, and it also roused the decaying RELIGIOUS SPIRIT of the Church of England, and of British Protestants generally. Burke was so opposed to the revolutionary principle, which he regarded as lawless atheism embodied, that he dreaded it far more than anything else. "If ever," he said, "the Church and the Constitution of England should fall in these islands (and they will fall together), it is not Presbyterian discipline nor Popish hierarchy that will rise upon their ruins. It will not be the Church of Rome nor the Church of Scotland—nor the Church of Luther, nor the Church of Calvin. On the contrary, all these Churches are menaced, and menaced alike. It is the new fanatical religion, now in the heat of its first ferment, of the Rights of Man, which rejects all establishments, all discipline, all ecclesiastical, and in truth all civil order, which will triumph, and which will lay prostrate your

church; which will destroy your distinctions, and which will put all your properties to auction, and disperse you over the earth."

The Protestants of Great Britain judged somewhat differently from Mr. Burke, though the difference was more in the manner than the matter. His description of them was quite true, that they were thoroughly convinced that "religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort. In England," he adds, "we are so convinced of this, that there is no rust of superstition with which the accumulated absurdity of the human mind might have crusted it over in the course of ages, that ninety-nine in a hundred of the people of England would not prefer to impiety." But the Protestants of England excepted Roman Catholicism. Formerly it had been dreaded as the ally of arbitrary power, the foe of civil liberty, and the antagonist of freedom of conscience. It was now dreaded as the prolific parent of revolution and atheism; beginning in the darkness of gross superstition, and ending in the horrid light of grosser infidelity.

Therefore, when Mr. Peel came into public life, what with the well-known royal repugnance to the Catholic claims, the excited religious as well as political fears of the British Protestants, and the increasing audacity of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, there was a stronger tendency to a "No Popery" cry than there had been for a consider-

able antecedent period. The worst characteristics of the penal code had been removed; the Roman Catholics were recognised as fellow-men, though not admitted to the full equality of fellow-subjects. The opponents of the Catholic claims were divided into two classes, the first of which resisted chiefly on grounds of political expediency, but to which the second class added the sanctions of religious conviction. Those who stood upon political expediency resisted the Catholic claims because they found a certain state of things which would not bear alteration; in the words of Lord Redesdale in 1811, "the constitution was essentially Protestant; it could not bear a Catholic sovereign, and how much less a Catholic minister!" But those who superadded the religious principle went much farther. They objected to anything which would appear to involve the state in a sanction of what they considered the idolatrous and blasphemous doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, such as that of transubstantiation, the Virgin Mary, &c.; they considered it a sacred and scriptural duty to discourage Popery by every means in their power, and in this spirit objected to the annual grant to Maynooth: this was the feeling of all who thought with Perceval, Vansittart (Lord Bexley), and Lord Sidmouth, who said he viewed it "as a religious question, and would not consent to place the *mass* under the acknowledgment of the law."

Mr. Peel took the ground of political expediency on the question of Catholic Emancipation. He came out on this subject in the year 1812, a year of remarkable controversy concerning it, in Ireland and both houses of Parliament. In a debate raised on the 3rd of February, Canning made one of those many able and brilliant speeches in favour of the Catholic claims for which his life is distinguished; it was the speech in which he made use of the famous expression—"Repeal the Union?—Restore the Heptarchy as soon!" Mr. Peel followed, in a very short speech, which is worth reading, as indicative of his future policy on the question of Catholic Emancipation:—

"What," he asked, "was the real state of the question? The law laid down certain securities for the Protestant interests, with which the Catholics were dissatisfied, and called for a concession of the whole, accusing the Protestants of throwing trifling obstacles in their way; while, on their part, they would not concede even the very little they had in their power. They on his side were accused of intolerance; and when they referred, to show the contrary, to the concessions made in 1778, 1782, and 1793, the Catholic advocates turned upon them and said, 'For these very reasons you are bound to grant us more.' But would they tell them where they were to stop, and not ask to be admitted to power without those oaths which were deemed necessary to bind

every other description of the subject?..... It had been charged to gentlemen on his side of the house, that they had raised the cry of No Popery! and a most serious charge it was, though altogether unsupported. But he would ask, on the other hand, whether or no pains had not been taken to inflame the passions of Catholics? And whether Liberty of Conscience had not been made the watchword of a party? In giving his vote, however, on the present occasion, *he would by no means pledge himself with regard to the Catholic question,* but merely give his negative to a motion which in the present instance was at least unnecessary."

In the course of the same year, Canning raised another debate in the House of Commons, making another elaborate speech, in which he declared himself "shocked at seeing exposed to sale, in the shop windows of the metropolis, an address to the worst passions of the vulgar, entitled 'An Awful Warning, or the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.'" Lord Castlereagh expressed himself willing, on this occasion, that emancipation should be granted, if it were accompanied with proper securities for the established state of things. The motion of Mr. Canning was, that the House should take the claims of the Catholics into consideration in the next session of Parliament, with a view to a final and conciliatory settlement; it was carried by 235 to 106: in the majority appears the name of Lord

Palmerston, and in the minority that of Robert Peel.

In this year, 1812, occurred the assassination of Mr. Perceval, the fruitless negotiations of the Marquis Wellesley to form an administration, one of the principles of which was the concession of the Catholic claims, and the appointment of the Earl of Liverpool to the head of a ministry determined to resist these claims. The Earl of Liverpool, however, did not take high ground on the question. "With respect to myself," he said in a letter to the Marquis Wellesley, "I must protest against its being inferred, from any declaration of mine, that it is, or ever has been my opinion, that under no circumstances it would be possible to make any alteration in the laws relating to the Roman Catholics." Other members of his administration were, however, of opinion that no circumstances could justify an alteration, which was the steady sentiment of Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, of Lord Sidmouth, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and of Nicholas Vansittart (Lord Bexley), the then noted Chancellor of the Exchequer. In this administration Lord Palmerston retained his place as Secretary at War; Frederick Robinson, the present Earl of Ripon, was Vice-President of the Board of Trade; and Robert Peel went to Ireland as Chief Secretary under the Duke of Richmond, Lord Lieutenant.

In his new position, Mr. Peel immediately dis-

played very high administrative abilities. But his position was a critical and troublesome one, for at the time no man could occupy it and give general satisfaction. The alarm which had been excited in England by the increased activity of the Roman Catholics, had revived in great power the Anti-Catholic feeling; and, for the first time, Orange Lodges were formed in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and in many other towns. This subject was noticed in Parliament in 1813, when a motion was made "to inquire into the existence of certain illegal societies under the denomination of Orangemen." A reference to the Lord Lieutenant, on this occasion, called up Mr. Peel, who warmly vindicated his impartiality. But whatever might be a Lord Lieutenant's impartiality, it was impossible for a Chief Secretary, who had openly attached himself to the resisting party (comprising at that time the vast majority of the people of England and Scotland, though in the House of Commons eloquence had warmed the tone of thinking), to maintain the appearance of impartiality when placed between the fires of two excited and contending parties. Gradually Mr. Peel was drawn in to become the apologist of Orange clubs and societies; and the opposite party exhibited their Irish wit by calling him "Orange Peel."

Mr. Peel found that the disturbed and distracted state of Ireland called for energetic measures; and

in 1814 he brought into the House of Commons several bills to arm the Irish government with additional powers. One of these was "for the better execution of the laws in Ireland, by appointing superintending magistrates and additional constables in certain cases." Even to this day, the constabulary force in Ireland is designated, in the rough vocabulary of the lower orders, "the bloody Peelers!" The other bills related to the preservation of the peace, by giving power to suppress unlawful conspiracies, &c.; for rendering more easy and effectual the redress of assaults, &c. Active measures were also taken to repress the agitation of the Roman Catholics; the "Catholic Board" was proclaimed as an unlawful assembly; and these, and other measures, brought Mr. Peel into personal collision with DANIEL O'CONNELL; produced a challenge for a duel, which never took place; and laid the foundation of that personal animosity between both which has prevailed through life, which Sir Robert Peel has tried to conceal, but which Mr. O'Connell has hardly ever missed an opportunity of proclaiming.

The organisation of the Roman Catholics of Ireland began early. In 1757 there was a "Catholic Committee" in Dublin, to procure a relaxation of the penal laws. From that period the power, importance, and efforts of the Roman Catholics increased; slowly, gradually, but still increasing; and with every relaxation of the penal

laws, the importunity strengthened, the "appetite growing by what it fed on." The Union was to have been followed by a full emancipation: it was not; and now that Roman Catholics could appear at the Irish Bar, and record their votes at the hustings, their determination to obtain the whole measure of their demands grew more and more intense. Then arose DANIEL O'CONNELL, perhaps the most remarkable of all the remarkable men who had ever advocated the Catholic claims. Grattan, and Curran, and Plunket were Protestants; some of the unhappy men whose lives had been forfeited to the laws which they had violated were remarkable more for their mistaken enthusiasm than for any qualities of judgment or prudence; the Roman Catholics had hitherto felt that their advocates had been rather WITH them than OF them. But here appeared a man, a Roman Catholic, a barrister, not a feeble, attenuated creature, nothing to remind them of the physical deficiencies of a Grattan or a Curran, but a brawny broad-shouldered Irishman, with a broad, laughing, grinning face, "more Irish than the Irish themselves," a rich provincial "brogue," a ready and racy vocabulary, familiar with the moral and mental constitution of his Roman Catholic countrymen, and ever ready to incorporate himself with their feelings by coarse or droll joke, vigorous vituperation, or rough but deep-toned eloquence. All the qualities of the demagogue he had in full: unflinch-

ing impudence, audacious assertion, restless motion, and reckless power. But above the qualities of the demagogue there were other and higher qualities —untiring energy, soaring ambition, exquisite tact, and instinctive sagacity. Such was the man whom his warm-hearted countrymen ultimately hailed as the Irish "LIBERATOR;" he whom they considered as having achieved their full freedom. By his side stood little SHEIL. Daniel O'Connell was *sui generis;* the *Mirabeau* of Ireland. But Richard Lalor Sheil was, in many respects, a perpetuation of the Grattans or the Currans: as insignificant in person, as careless in personal attire, his taste was as cultivated and even more refined, and his eloquence as rhetorical and electrical. These were the two leading men who organised the Irish for more combined and desperate effort: Daniel O'Connell originated the "Catholic Association;" devised the terms by which admission to it might be obtained, namely, by payment of a "Catholic Rent;" pointed out how, in their proceedings, the law must be adhered to, even in the letter; and pledged Roman Catholics not to vote at elections for members of Parliament unless they were favourable to the "Catholic claims."

Some Roman Catholics in this country had exhibited to the jealous and incredulous Protestants the spectacle of a rigid adherence to Roman Catholic doctrine, and yet a disposition to advocate the claims of universal humanity, especially in the

matter of general toleration. Such was Father O'Leary, who, in Ireland and in London, was noted as a staunch Roman Catholic priest, but not the less a stronger friend of man. The feeling which such exhibitions were calculated to maintain was almost quenched by the French Revolution, which led the Protestants to imagine that Roman Catholicism had but two tendencies—either to make men lie down in gross superstition, or to break out in atheism and revolution. Daniel O'Connell was, therefore, in some measure, the first man who taught publicly and effectively, that an Irish Roman Catholic might be an eloquent pleader on behalf of the oppressed all over the world. He burst away from the more rigid of his own communion; on more than one occasion flew in the face of the Holy See; and called out aloud, "We are Roman Catholics, but not slaves of Rome!" Though at first O'Connell was regarded with some suspicion by the English Dissenters, he slowly won upon their affections; and in England the Irish agitator was heard advocating the rights of civil and religious liberty all over the world, and the utter abolition of slavery. This conduct redeemed many a blot; glossed over many a rough feature; and had some influence on Catholic Emancipation.

Meantime, Mr. Peel was elected member for the University of Oxford in 1817; and resigned his Irish Secretaryship in 1818. His elevation to

the proud position of the representation of the University was a consequence of his opposition to the Catholic claims. Many years afterwards, Canning, then Prime Minister of England, in alluding to the desertion of his old colleagues on account of his advocacy of these claims, mentioned that the representation of the University of Oxford had been a fond dream of his ambition. But it was intimated to him, that his approbation of Catholic Emancipation was an insuperable bar; and he saw the coveted honour conferred on his younger rival.

Slowly, from year to year, went on the debate, now hotly, now languidly, until, after the death of Grattan, Mr. (Lord) Plunket took a leading part in the subject. In 1821, in the House of Commons, he alluded, in his grand and solemn way, to the illustrious men, now no more, who had advocated Catholic Emancipation. Borrowing consciously or unconsciously from Burke,* he exclaimed, "Walking before the sacred images of these illustrious dead, as in a public and solemn procession, shall we not dismiss all party feeling, all angry passions, and unworthy prejudices?" Then, personally addressing himself to Mr. Peel, he said, "I assure him that, in selecting him, I do it with all the respect due to his talents, to his ac-

* The disastrous events, which have followed one upon another, in a long unbroken funeral train, moving in a procession," &c.—*Burke's First Letter on a Regicide Peace.*

quirements, to his integrity, and to his high principles as a statesman and a gentleman. I am well aware that there is no member likely to be more influential on this subject; and I may add, that there is no person whose being confirmed in what I must call unfounded prejudices is likely to work more serious injury to the country."

Mr. Peel responded to this address in a strain not unworthy of it. He declared that he "never could hear those names mentioned which were ranged in authority against him, as they had been cited in this instance, and feel altogether satisfied. He did not stand there to take any sophistical advantage of the arguments of his opponents. It was not the love of victory, but the sincere desire to state his honest conviction, which made him come forward; and if he could be actuated by any sordid and base spirit of opposition, he would be ashamed, with those great names against him, to look that house in the face. The authorities which had been referred to made it the paramount duty of every man to examine the grounds of his opinion, and to ascertain that no interested views, no ideas of visionary danger, no irrational hostility to a great class of his fellow-subjects, influenced his decision. But if, after such a close and scrutinising examination of their own motives, he and his friends found it necessary still to retain their opinions, he would trust to the liberality of the right honourable gentleman for doing them

the justice to suppose that it was in the fair and candid exercise of a free judgment concerning matters most important to the religion of the state, that they ventured to differ from him, and the great authorities which he had cited."

Having gone over the usual topics with which concession was resisted, and reminded the house that "they were legislating for posterity," he sank into doubt and hesitation towards the close of his speech:—

"He could most conscientiously assure the house that *no result of the debate could give him unqualified satisfaction.* He was of course bound to wish that the opinions which he honestly felt might prevail; *but their prevalence must still be mingled with regret at the disappointment which he knew the success of such opinions must entail upon a great portion of his fellow-subjects.* If, however, on the contrary, the motion succeeded, no man who heard him would more *cordially rejoice if his predictions proved unfounded, his arguments groundless,* and that the result should exemplify the sanguine expectations of the right honourable mover, and give an increased confidence to all classes of His Majesty's subjects in that interesting country, in which such union and harmony were most desirable."

Plunket carried his motion by a small majority. It was in this debate that Canning made another of his remarkable speeches; and in allusion to the

fears which were entertained, that if men like O'Connell were admitted into the House of Commons, they might do much mischief, Canning said, "He had never known a demagogue, who, when elected to a seat in that house, did not in the course of six months shrink to his proper dimensions. Here," he would say, "let the demagogue appear, and let him do his worst!"

Passing over intermediate years, including the remarkable year 1825, during which the Duke of York, the heir presumptive of the crown, avowed, in the House of Lords, his determination, under all circumstances, to resist the Catholic claims, we come to the commencement of 1827,—when the Earl of Liverpool was suddenly incapacitated, and retired from the post of Prime Minister, which he had held from 1812,—a longer period than such an office had been filled by any one individual from the time of Lord Burleigh, with the exception of Sir Robert Walpole. No sooner was it known that Canning was at the head of the administration, than Lord Chancellor Eldon, the Duke of Wellington, Earl Bathurst, the Earl of Westmoreland, Lord Bexley, Mr. Peel, and others, promptly resigned, in a manner which gave rise to a very general opinion that there was a cabal against the new Prime Minister. Mr. Peel, in the House of Commons, defended himself and his colleagues. "The grounds," he said, "on which I retired from office are simply these: I have taken, from the

first moment of my public life, an active and decided part on a great and vital question—that of the extension of political privileges to the Roman Catholics. . . . . For eighteen years I have constantly offered an uncompromising, but I hope a temperate, fair, and constitutional resistance to every proposition for granting any further concessions to them. . . . . My opposition is founded on principle. I think that the continuance of those bars which prevent the acquisition of political power by the Catholics is necessary for the maintenance of the constitution, and the interests of the Established Church. This being the broad, distinct, and intelligible ground which I have all along taken, I leave it to be judged by the country at large, whether or no there was any sufficient reason to induce me to acquiesce in an arrangement calculated to promote an object I have constantly and strenuously resisted. I saw no such reason, and therefore determined to retire from public service, should my right honourable friend (Mr. Canning) be placed at the head of the Treasury . . . . . It is not merely that my right honourable friend differs from me on *this* important question, but that the change in the administration occasions the transfer of all that influence and power which belongs to the office of Prime Minister to the hands of one who will use it for the purpose of forwarding the object I have always resisted. It is not a transfer of that influ-

ence and power from one ordinary man to another ordinary man, but a transfer from the most able opponent of the Catholic claims to their most zealous and eloquent advocate."

Mr. Canning's short but remarkable administration was closed by his unexpected death. He was succeeded in office by Mr. Frederick Robinson, who was converted into Lord Goderich, whose ministry, after wriggling for a very brief space, expired from the effects, ostensibly, of a personal dispute between two of its members, but probably from the conviction of its head that he was unequal to the exigency.

Then came the Wellington-Peel administration, composed mainly of the old ingredients of the Liverpool ministry, with the exception of Lord Lyndhurst as Chancellor, in the room of Lord Eldon. Mr. Peel, in the House of Commons, narrated the circumstances of the formation of this ministry. On the 9th of January, 1828, he received a letter from the Duke of Wellington, stating that he had been commissioned by the king to form a new ministry, and requesting him to return to London without delay, that his grace might confer with him on the subject. He immediately set out for London, and expressed to the duke his perfect willingness to serve under him; stating his opinion, that, looking to the composition of the House of Commons, and to the general condition of our foreign and commercial

relations, he was convinced that the country could not be governed on any exclusive principles, and, particularly, that it would be impossible to form a government founded either on the principles of excluding the Catholic question altogether, or of carrying it as a *sine qua non*. In these sentiments the Duke of Wellington entirely coincided.

The Roman Catholics had imbibed hopes from the elevation of Mr. Canning, which were dashed by his death. His successor, Lord Goderich, was favourable to their claims, but too feeble to carry them. But the Wellington-Peel administration was calculated to crush all their expectations; nor were their fears lessened by the declaration of the Duke of Wellington, in the debate on the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, when he stated that until he saw "a great change" in the question of the Roman Catholic claims, he should certainly oppose it. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was a triumph gained by Lord John Russell, leading the opposition party in the House of Commons on that occasion, over the lukewarm opposition of Mr. Peel, as the head of the government party; and the repeal of these acts was an additional incentive to the Roman Catholics.

The "Catholic Association," with its organised members, and its "Catholic Rent," set to work with more earnestness than ever. An opportunity soon occurred for bringing the war to closer

quarters. Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald (now a member of the House of Lords, and at present the President of the Board of Control), by accepting the office of President of the Board of Trade, necessarily vacated his seat for the county of Clare. He had uniformly given his vote and influence in favour of Catholic Emancipation; but the Catholic Association resolved that Daniel O'Connell should oppose him. This was a novel point, and startled the entire empire by its very audacity. There was no question but the electors could return a Roman Catholic as their representative; the question was, could he take his seat in the House of Commons without those oaths which no conscientious Roman Catholic could possibly take? The entire United Kingdom felt intense interest in the strife; and Ireland itself was shaken to its centre.

Mr. Fitzgerald vainly appealed to the justice of the Clare electors. "My joining the administration of the Duke of Wellington," said he, "is the front and head of my offending. Be the consequences what they may, I declare that I am proud of being his colleague, and possessing his confidence. But, at a moment when the Catholic question has been triumphant in the House of Commons, and when the discussion in the House of Lords has been marked by a greater degree of liberality than was heretofore exhibited, I confess it appears strange to me that such a moment should

be chosen by the Catholics of Ireland to announce their hostility to a government under whose auspices such a favourable change had taken place, and to select a member of that government—one who at least honestly supported their cause—as a victim upon whom to wreak their vengeance."

All was vain: the Catholic priests and the forty-shilling freeholders placed Mr. O'Connell at the head of the poll. The Catholic Association, which had changed its form, in order to avoid a temporary law directed both against it and Orange Lodges, now started into new activity, and resolved to improve its triumph. The session was too far advanced for Mr. O'Connell to proceed to London, in order to try the question of taking his seat in the House of Commons without accepting the requisite oaths; but a plan was organised by the Catholic Association for putting in practice the nomination of Roman Catholics at all future elections, and thus of keeping up a perpetual war on the question.

Not only were the Orange Lodges revived, but Brunswick Clubs were also started, which, in imitation of the Catholic Rent, established a Protestant Rent, to arm themselves with power to resist the Roman Catholics; and reports were industriously circulated that this Protestant Rent was employed for the purchase of arms and ammunition. The Roman Catholics, on the other hand, assembled in thousands, and marched up and down the

country in military array. "Does not," exclaimed Mr. Sheil, "a tremendous organization extend over the whole island? Have not all the natural bonds by which men are tied together been broken and burst asunder? Are not all the relations of society, which exist elsewhere, gone? Has not property lost its influence—has not rank been stripped of the respect which should belong to it; and has not an internal government grown up, which, gradually superseding the legitimate authorities, has armed itself with a complete domination? .... But an immense population thus united, thus affiliated, thus controlled, in such a state of complete subordination, affords matter of the most solemn meditation. A feeling of expectation begins to manifest itself among the people. They put painful questions, and awful interrogatories. But if the state of the Catholics be deserving of attention, that of the Protestants calls also for remark. It is in vain for us to hide it from ourselves. The Protestants are every day becoming more alienated by our display of power. The great proprietors, and all men who have an interest in the security of the state, are anxious for the settlement of the question; but still their pride is wounded, and they see with some disrelish the attitude of just equality which we have assumed. .... Meanwhile the government stand by, and the minister folds his arms as if he were a mere indifferent observer, and the terrific contest only

afforded him a spectacle for the amusement of his official leisure. He sits as if two gladiators were crossing their swords for his recreation. The Cabinet seems to be little better than a box in an amphitheatre, from whence his Majesty's ministers may survey the business of blood. This then is the state of things:—There are three parties concerned—the Catholics, the Protestants, and the Government; the Catholics advance upon one hand, the Protestants upon the other, and the Government, by whom both ought to be controlled, looks passively on."

Such a state of things could not continue under the administration of the Duke of Wellington; and when a staunch opposer of the Catholic claims, Mr. Dawson, the brother-in-law of Mr. Peel, in a speech at Londonderry, on the 12th of August, intimated a change in his opinion, it was hailed as indicative of the intentions of the ministry. The uneasiness which this occasioned to the Protestants was immensely augmented by a letter written by the Duke of Wellington at the close of the year. Dr. Curtis, the titular Catholic primate of Ireland, had held a high office in the University of Salamanca, and had become intimate with the Duke of Wellington when he was in Spain. The primate wrote to the Duke on the subject of the settlement of the Catholic claims; and his grace, in an enigmatical reply, said, "If we could bury the question in oblivion for a short time, and employ

that time diligently in the consideration of its difficulties on all sides (for they are very great), I should not despair of seeing a satisfactory remedy." This was a private communication, but it was instantly made public through the medium of the Catholic Association; and the Marquis of Anglesey, the Lord Lieutenant (favourable to the Catholic claims), having written a letter of congratulatory advice, which was also immediately published, he was recalled from the government. Meantime, while all this was going on, Mr. Peel, who, in Parliament, had, on the 10th of May, 1828, ranked himself amongst those "in whose minds no disposition to change existed," accepted, during the autumn, the public banquets of the gentry and manufacturers of Lancashire, as the champion of the Protestant cause, without allowing a syllable to escape from him which could raise any suspicion of the great coming event.

Towards the end of January, 1829, a whisper was murmured amongst the public, that ministers intended to recommend Parliament to take into its consideration the subject of the Roman Catholic disabilities; and on the 5th of February it was confirmed by the Royal Speech on the opening of the session. On the day before the meeting of Parliament, Mr. Peel addressed a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, in which he admitted that he enjoyed the confidence of the major portion of his constituents on account of his

resistance to the Catholic claims; intimating that he intended to resign his seat, and as he said, "by that painful sacrifice—by the forfeiture of that high distinction which I have prized much more than any other object of ambition, to give at least a decisive proof that I have not taken my present course without the most mature deliberation, and that I have not suffered myself to be influenced by any other motive than that of an overpowering sense of public duty." The surprised and angry University refused to re-elect him. His opponent was Sir Robert Harry Inglis, who carried the election by a majority of 146 out of 1364 voters polled; and shortly afterwards Mr. Peel was elected for the borough of Westbury in Wiltshire.

During the absence of Mr. Peel from Parliament, there was no little vituperation of him, both in the House of Commons and in the country. On one occasion Sir James Graham took up his defence. "I cannot," he said, "boast of any acquaintance with that right honourable gentleman in private life. I have been opposed to him on almost every occasion since I entered upon public life. I have not voted with him, I believe, on five occasions since I came into Parliament. I think him, however, a really honest and conscientious man; and considering the great sacrifices which he has recently made—the connexions from which he has torn himself—the public attachments which he has broken asunder—the dangers which he might have

created by a different course—the difficulties which he might have aggravated by adhering to his old system—the civil war which he has avoided by departing from it—and the great public service which he has rendered to the state by his manly avowal of his change of opinion—considering all these circumstances, I think the right honourable gentleman entitled to the highest praise, and to the honest support of every friend of the Catholics."

On the 5th of March Mr. Peel brought forward the measure, the interest of which absorbed for the time every other consideration. Strangers assembled in the avenues of the House of Commons as early as ten o'clock in the morning, though the gallery was not opened till six in the evening. In two minutes not a seat was unoccupied, while the lobby was crowded with people anxious to avail themselves of any resignations of places which heat, pressure, or fatigue might occasion. Mr. Peel's speech occupied more than four hours in delivery, and the cheering which from time to time it produced was occasionally heard at a great distance from the House.

"I have," said Mr. Peel, "for years attempted to maintain the exclusion of Roman Catholics from Parliament and the high offices of the state. I do not think it was an unnatural or an unreasonable struggle. I resign it, in consequence of the conviction that it can be no longer advantageously maintained; from believing that there are not ade-

quate materials or sufficient instruments for its effectual and permanent continuance. *I yield, therefore,* to a MORAL NECESSITY *which I cannot control,* unwilling to push resistance to a point which might endanger the establishments that I wish to defend."

Referring to his past conduct he observed, "So far as my own course in this question is concerned, it is the same with that which suggested itself to my mind in 1825, when I was his Majesty's principal minister for the Home Department, and found myself in a minority of this House upon this question. When I then saw the numbers arrayed against me, I felt that my position as a minister was untenable. The moment that I, the minister responsible for the government of Ireland, found that I was left in a minority on the question which was of paramount interest and importance to that country, that moment I sought to be relieved from the duties and responsibilities of office. I stated to the Earl of Liverpool, who was then at the head of the administration, that in consequence of the decision given against me in this House, it was my anxious wish to be relieved from office. It was, however, notified to me, that my retirement would occasion the retirement of the Earl of Liverpool, and that such an event would at once produce a dissolution of the Administration. Lord Liverpool was then approaching the close of his career. I had entered public life

under his auspices, and I shrunk from the painful task of causing his retirement, and the dissolution of his Majesty's existing government. If I had acted simply in obedience to my own wishes, I would have resigned. I was induced, however, to retain office, and to ascertain the result of another appeal to the country by a general election. In 1826 there was a new Parliament. In 1827 a majority in this House decided against the Catholic question. In 1828, however, the House took a different view of the matter, and though it did not pass a bill, it agreed to a resolution favourable to the principle of adjustment. That resolution being passed, I was again in the situation in which I had been placed in 1825, and I determined to retire from office. I intimated my fixed intention, in this respect, to the Duke of Wellington; but I felt it my duty to accompany that intimation with the declaration—not only that I would not, in a private capacity, any longer obstruct a settlement which appeared to me ultimately inevitable, but that I would advise and promote it. Circumstances occurred, as I have already explained, under which I was appealed to, to remain in office; under which I was told, that my retirement from office must prevent the adoption of the course which I was disposed to recommend. I resolved, therefore, and without doubt or hesitation, not to abandon my post, but to take all the personal consequences of originating and

enforcing, as a minister, the very measure which I had heretofore opposed.

"I was called upon to make those sacrifices of private feeling, which are inseparable from apparent inconsistency of conduct—from the abandonment of preconceived opinions—from the alienation of those with whom I had heretofore co-operated. I have done so; and have proved that it is painful in the extreme to prefer, to such considerations, even the most urgent sense of public duty.

> 'Tis said with ease—but oh! how hardly tried
> By haughty souls to human honour tied—
> Oh! sharp convulsive pangs of agonising pride!' "

After going over the entire history of the question, the various weighty and cogent reasons why it should now be settled, and the details of the measure proposed, he thus concluded:—

"I will hope for the best. God grant that the moral storm may be appeased—that the turbid waters of strife may be settled and composed—and that, having found their just level, they may be mingled, with equal flow, in one clear and common stream. But if these expectations are to be disappointed—if, unhappily, civil strife and contention shall survive the restoration of political privilege;—if there be something in the spirit of the Roman Catholic religion which disdains equality, and will be satisfied with nothing but ascendancy—still, I am content to run the hazard of the

change. The contest, if inevitable, will be fought for other objects, and with other arms. The struggle will be—not for the abolition of civil distinctions, but for the predominance of an intolerant religion.

"I contemplate the progress of that struggle with pain, but I look forward to its issue with perfect composure and confidence. We shall have dissolved the great moral alliance that has hitherto given strength to the cause of the Roman Catholics. We shall range on our side the illustrious authorities which have heretofore been enlisted upon theirs;—the rallying cry of 'Civil Liberty' will then be all our own. We shall enter the field with the full assurance of victory—armed with the consciousness of having done justice, and of being in the right—backed by the unanimous feeling of England—by the firm union of orthodoxy and dissent—by the applauding voice of Scotland; and if other aid be requisite, cheered by the sympathies of every free state in either hemisphere, and by the wishes and the prayers of every free man, in whatever clime or under whatever form of government his lot may have been cast."

In a subsequent speech, Mr. Peel disclaimed the merit which was attributed to him, of carrying the question. "The credit," he said, "belongs to others, and not to me. It belongs to Fox—to Grattan—to Plunket—to the gentlemen opposite,

and to an illustrious friend of mine (Canning) who is now no more. By their efforts, in spite of my opposition, it has proved victorious."

And so at last was settled—not indeed without angry strife, vituperation, and a war of recriminatory words—the great question of CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION; and after a struggle of THREE CENTURIES Protestants and Roman Catholics met in the Legislature on equal terms; while a solid foundation was laid for the future progress and future welfare of Ireland which no agitation can ever disturb.

Eleven years after the passing of Catholic Emancipation (namely, in January, 1840) Sir Robert Peel, in vindicating himself from the absurd imputation of wishing to repeal that great act, gave some interesting explanations respecting it. After the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel had made up their minds to its necessity, it was difficult to induce George the Fourth to agree to it; so much so, that neither of these statesmen knew, within a month of bringing on the measure, whether or not they would have the royal authority. Nay, on the 4th of March—the day preceding that on which it was brought on in the House of Commons—the Duke of Wellington, Lord Lyndhurst, and Sir Robert Peel "*retired from Windsor Castle out of office;*" and the royal authority was only given at the last moment.

CHAPTER IV.

Improvement of the Civil and Criminal Law.

"There are deep questions, where great names militate against each other; where reason is perplexed, and an appeal to authorities only thickens the confusion. For high and reverend authorities lift up their heads on both sides; and there is no sure footing in the middle. This point is the great Serbonian Bog, betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius old, where armies whole have sunk.

"The question is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a lawyer tells me I *may* do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do."—Burke.

Half a century ago, and down to a much later period, the good people of England could count on an ever-abundant supply of public executions, as one of their perennial pleasures, there being upwards of three hundred legal traps for catching victims for the gallows. The citizens of London had, of course, the largest share of this species of public recreation. Eight times a year they could reckon on a given number of wretches issuing from Newgate, to be strung up like rabbits at a poulterer's door; not to mention Horsemonger Lane gaol, on the Surrey side of the Thames, or other places of "hideous" resort. So late as the year 1820, there were fourteen persons hung in London

in one week; while farther back, in the ten years from 1780 to 1789, the citizens were treated to fifty-four on an annual average, some of the years including numbers as high as ninety-two and ninety-seven. The total number hung in London, in the fifty years ending 1820, was 1371, giving a yearly average during that period of between twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

The "Pillory" was another elegant recreation, affording far more "fun" than the more sombre amusement of the gibbet. Here the worthy mob could exhibit the strength and fervour of moral sentiment, by treating their fellow-creatures as "shy-cocks," tied to a stake, to be either bespattered with rotten eggs, or else run the risk of having their brains knocked out with a brickbat. In earlier times the pillory was not allowed to be a sieve through which the claims of offended justice might be permitted to run. "In a case which occurred in 1759, an under-sheriff of Middlesex was fined fifty pounds and imprisoned two months by the Court of King's Bench, because, in executing the sentence upon Dr. Shebbeare, who had been convicted of a political libel, he had allowed him to be attended upon the platform by a servant in livery, holding an umbrella over his head, and to stand without having his neck and arms confined *in* the pillory." The mob certainly could be discriminating in their favours to persons exposed in the pillory. In 1812, a period of much political

excitement, a person named Eaton was convicted of an irreligious libel; but when placed on the pillory, he was received with demonstrations of respect, the crowd generally taking off their hats, and individuals offering him wine and refreshments. But the same mob could make the "pillory" a "sentence of death," when their feelings, or rather their passions, were excited against the offenders. Of this we quote a notable instance from Prior's Life of Burke :—

Two men were sentenced to the pillory at St. Margaret's Hill, Southwark, for attempts at an atrocious offence. "One of them being of short stature, and remarkably short-necked, could not reach the hole made for the admission of the head. The officers of justice nevertheless forced his head through the hole, and the poor wretch hung rather than walked as the pillory turned round. Previous to being put in he had deprecated the vengeance of the mob, and begged for that mercy which, from their exasperation at his crime, and their want of considering the consequences of their cruelty, they seemed very little to bestow. He soon grew black in the face, and the blood issued from his nostrils, his eyes, and his ears; the mob nevertheless attacked him with great fury. The officers, seeing his situation, opened the pillory, and the poor wretch fell down dead on the stand of the instrument. The other man was likewise so

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maimed and hurt by what was thrown at him that he lay there without hope of recovery."

Yet, for noticing this case in the House of Commons, Mr. Burke was assailed with slanderous insinuations against his personal character; and years afterwards, on the slander being repeated, he felt himself under the necessity of bringing the matter into a court of justice, in order to vindicate himself from imputations which, however he might himself despise, were yet calculated to do injury to that reputation which was the just source of his influence.

The condition of our prisons was no less a cause of deep reproach to us than the severity of our criminal law. Howard, a name dear to every Englishman, was the first to draw public attention to a matter which, down to the present hour, has never ceased to secure it. Of this illustrious man we need not speak, for the particulars of his life are familiar to every reader; but we shall quote, by way of illustration and contrast, those encomiums of his character which have been given by two men very dissimilar in the structure of their minds :—

"I cannot name this gentleman," says Burke, in his celebrated eulogium, "without remarking that his labours and writings have done much to open the eyes and hearts of mankind. He has visited all Europe—not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces, or the stateliness of temples; not

to make accurate measurements of the remains of ancient grandeur, nor to form a scale of the curiosity of modern arts; not to collect medals or collate manuscripts, but to dive into the depths of dungeons; to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries. His plan is original, and it is as full of genius as it is of humanity. It was a voyage of discovery; a circumnavigation of charity. Already the benefit of his labour is felt more or less in every country. I hope he will anticipate its final reward by seeing all its effects fully realised in his own."

Not so gorgeous, but still eloquent and striking, is Jeremy Bentham's eulogium of Howard. "My venerable friend was much better employed than in arranging words and sentences. Instead of doing what so many could do if they would, what he did for the service of mankind was what scarce any man could have done, and no man would do, but himself. In the scale of moral desert, the labours of the legislator and the writer are as far below his, as earth is below heaven. His was the truly Christian choice; the lot in which is to be found the least of that which selfish nature covets, and the most of what it shrinks from. His king-

dom was of a better world: he died a martyr, after living an apostle."

The tendency of a severe penal code to defeat its own objects, and to deprave the character of a people, was pointed out by a celebrated Italian, Beccaria, whose work, on "Crimes and Punishments," was published in 1774, and being translated into various European languages, excited great and deserved attention. Yet our own criminal law, the severest almost in Europe, found advocates and vindicators, even amongst enlightened and humane men; one of whom was Paley, whose palliation of our excess of capital punishments is remarkable for its apparent sophistry, and yet worth reading, as a *résumé*, by anticipation, of the arguments with which, during many succeeding years, the amelioration of our criminal code was resisted in Parliament. Speaking of the comparative mildness of the criminal law of other countries, Paley says:—

"The law of England is constructed upon a different and better policy. By the number of statutes enacting capital offences, it sweeps into the net every crime which, under any possible circumstances, may merit the punishment of death; but when the execution of the sentence comes to be deliberated upon, a small proportion of each class are singled out—the general character or peculiar aggravations of whose crimes render them fit examples of public justice. By this expedient

few actually suffer death, while the dread and the danger of it hang over the crimes of many. The tenderness of the law cannot be taken advantage of. The life of the subject is spared, as far as the necessity of restraint and intimidation permit; yet no one will adventure upon the commission of any enormous crime, from a knowledge that the laws have not provided for its punishment. The wisdom and humanity of this design furnish a just excuse for the multiplicity of capital offences, which the laws of England are accused of enacting beyond those of other countries. The charge of cruelty is answered by observing, that these laws were never meant to be carried into indiscriminate execution; that the legislature, when it establishes its last and highest sanctions, trusts to the benignity of the crown to relax their severity, as often as circumstances appear to palliate the offence, or even as often as those circumstances are wanting which rendered the rigorous interposition necessary. Upon this plan, it is enough to vindicate the lenity of the laws, that *some* instances are to be found in each class of capital crimes which require the restraint of capital punishment, and that this restraint could not be applied without subjecting the whole class to the same condemnation."

Such being the pleas with which grave and good men palliated a criminal code remarkable for its atrocious and debasing severity, we need

not marvel that our civil law, overlaid with absurdity, and defaced with self-contradictions, should have had learned and ingenious apologists, who deprecated all meddling with what popular opinion had somehow come to consider as the perfection of reason. The common law of the land, whose origin Sir Matthew Hale affirmed was as "undiscoverable as the head of the Nile," has come down to us from our remote and primitive ancestors, whose simple judicial rules and legal customs were the origin of that vast and complex system expounded and administered in Westminster Hall. Decision after decision—rule after rule—statute after statute—created a patchwork of confusion on primitive simplicity, and the law of England was as difficult of mastery as it required wisdom and skill to interpret and apply. Nevertheless, it was under this complex system that England rose to greatness; and it is no wonder (it is, on the whole, rather matter of congratulation) that a nation should reverence authority and law, even when they cannot comprehend its nature, or explain its origin. But at the same time, as people like to have some reason for what they do, we can perfectly understand the cause why Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England were, and have been, received with so much favour and affection. Blackstone, as a lecturer in the University of Oxford, set about the task of digesting the laws of this country; expounding, explaining,

adapting, and reconciling, what had hitherto appeared a frightful mass of confusion; and this he did in a very able, popular, and agreeable way. Of these "Commentaries," which were the origin of Blackstone's elevation to the bench, it will be quite enough to quote the praise given by Jeremy Bentham:—"They are," he says, "correct, elegant, unembarrassed, ornamented; the style is such as could scarce fail to recommend a work still more vicious in point of matter to the multitude of readers. He it is, in short, who, first of all institutional writers, has taught jurisprudence to speak the language of the scholar and the gentleman; put a polish upon that rugged science; cleansed her from the dust and cobwebs of the office; and if he has not enriched her with that precision that is drawn only from the sterling treasury of the sciences, has decked her out, however, to advantage, from the toilet of classic erudition, enlivened her with metaphors and allusions, and sent her abroad, in some measure to instruct, and in still greater measure to entertain, the most miscellaneous and even the most fastidious societies."

Jeremy Bentham was one of Blackstone's pupils at Oxford; and according to his own account (and, though a vain, as he was a veracious man, there is no reason to doubt his account) he was, at the early age of sixteen years, dissatisfied with many of Blackstone's explanations, which he considered as

so many fallacies. The first volume of Blackstone's Commentaries was published at Oxford in 1765; and in 1776 appeared Bentham's first work, "A Fragment on Government." It was published anonymously; and, though it was a book not calculated to gain many readers, it at least startled the thinkers. "This little work," says an admirer of Bentham, "in which the utmost severity of reasoning is united with the greatest imaginable felicity and perspicuity of expression, with the happiest and most playful humour, and the most pointed sarcasm without the appearance of ill-nature, is still further recommended by the sincerity with which every line in it is stamped." This is high praise, but on the whole not undeserved. Dr. Johnson attributed the work to Dunning, the famous lawyer, afterwards Lord Ashburton. Bentham's book may be termed the first philosophic attack on the English Constitution: in it he first propounded his well-known doctrine of UTILITY; and with it he commenced his long career of projects of legal regeneration and social reform, which he sent out of his closet to disturb mankind, and make them either better or worse.

The same year, 1776, in which Bentham's "Fragment on Government" was published, saw the publication of another work, more significant and more startling in its nature. This was the American "Declaration of Independence," with

which the revolutionary struggle was fairly commenced—that struggle which ended in the independence of the United States, which inspired the Irish with a longing to play a game to the same tune, and made them get up their serio-comic drama of "Irish Volunteers" and national independence; and which, no doubt, had a great effect on the minds of the French, and hastened the explosion of the French revolution. The questions started by a Blackstone and a Bentham were thus brought into terrible and practical debate in the affairs of the world; while Paley and Paine, Burke and Godwin, set men chattering about the origin and nature of law and government, the "Rights of Man" and "Political Justice;" and not a few dreamers thought that the Millennium of social happiness and earthly perfection was close at hand.

Bentham was, doubtless, a very remarkable man, and, questionless, a good man, who imagined that he was busily employed during his long life in promoting the benefit of those who are to live, not only hundreds but thousands of years hence. We smile at this excess of egotism, which would be ludicrous, were it not so tranquilly audacious: what *must* have been the self-opinion of a man who is reported to have wished that "he should like to live the remaining years of his life, a year at a time at the end of the next six or eight centuries," to see the effect which his writings would

by that time have had upon the world!" After going about England and the continent for a short time, and busying himself and the Pitt administration with plans for improving prisons and prison discipline, he retired to a house in Westminster, where he shut himself up for half a century, trying to adapt man, human nature, the mind, the body, passions, prejudices, the world, the universe, and even GOD himself, to the doctrine of UTILITY. Hazlitt drew his picture, exhibiting him to us with "His mind still buoyant with thought and with the prospect of futurity, in eager conversation with some Opposition member, some expatriated patriot, or Transatlantic adventurer, or planning a code of laws for some 'lone island in the watery waste,' his walk almost amounting to a run, his tongue keeping pace with it in shrill cluttering accents, negligent of his person, his dress, and his manner, intent only on his grand theme of UTILITY—or pausing, perhaps, for want of breath, and with lack-lustre eye, to point out to the stranger a stone in the wall at the end of his garden (overarched by two beautiful cotton-trees) *Inscribed to the Prince of Poets,* which marks the house where Milton formerly lived." Or, take another description. "Though," says a fervent disciple, Dr. Southwood Smith, "he himself took no part in the actual business of legislation and government, yet, either by personal communication or confidential correspondence

with them, he guided the minds of many of the most distinguished legislators and patriots, not only of his own country, but of all countries in both hemispheres. To frame weapons for the advocates of the reform of the institutions of his own country was his daily occupation and his highest pleasure; and to him resorted, for counsel and encouragement, the most able and devoted of these advocates; while the patriots and philanthropists of Europe, as well as those of the new world, the countrymen of Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, together with the legislators and patriots of South America, speak of him as a tutelary spirit, and declare the practical application of his principles to be the object and end of their labours."

The plain English of this is, that Bentham conceived he had a GREAT MISSION in MORALS and LEGISLATION; and that he was destined to remould the entire matter of human thought and action, and to adjust it on a permanent basis, not only for his own country and his own time, but for all countries and for all time. It might be all very well if men and society could be converted into a *tabula rasa* on which to perform such magnificent experiments; but in a country such as England, whose whole character, institutions, habits, and condition have been the result, not of profound premeditated plan, but of casual, varying, and contradictory events and necessities, the growth of

Time, instead of the fruit of Speculation, such a man as Bentham is calculated to work as much mischief as good. Seated in his "pensive cell," and dreaming over projects of utilitarian perfection, he would have cut up everything in our laws and social relations which could not meet the requirements of positive utility; and placing all as the ingredients of the great mince pie of Codification, bake it in the hot oven of present excitement and change, for the future enjoyment of men in a new stage of human existence.

Apart from the right or the wrong of the Benthamite philosophy, its great defect is, not only that it would sacrifice the present to the future, but that its tendency is to create an unnatural excitement and dissatisfaction in the human mind. Men like to be satisfied; they like to have *reasons*; they have no objection to have their feelings reconciled with their understanding; and hence the popularity of Blackstone's "Commentaries." But in the great and complex business of law and legislation, it is frequently far better that the national mind should rest in the vagueness of a fallacy, than to be tormented with the acuteness of a logical definition; far better that an entire people, who have not yet discovered that they are utterly miserable, should be convinced that, on the whole, they are tolerably well as they are, than be prematurely driven into the discovery that they are much worse than they might be. A simple-

minded Englishman talks of a "limited monarchy," and fancies that he understands by such a phrase a government composed of a ruling head aided by a legislative body, controlled by the people. But the sharp-pointed beak of a Benthamite smashes his delusion; he is told that a "limited monarchy" is a contradiction in terms; that there are no such absurdities as "*limited* monarchies;" and that it is exceedingly wrong not to use right phraseology. In this there may be wonderful precision of language, and precision of language is doubtless auxiliary to precision of thought. But the only effect which such an exercise of etymology and logic is likely to have on the mind of our aforesaid Englishman, is, either to make him despise the pedantry, and to cherish with greater affection his notion of a "limited monarchy;" or else to startle him into a sort of stupid wonder and amazement that he should have been so long the dupe of his own tongue, and the admirer of a form of government which is *not* a "limited monarchy," but a something where the "sovereign power" is lodged in crown and parliament.

Had Bentham been content with weaving his theories in his closet, he might have been very harmlessly employed in "exhausting worlds and then imagining new;" and "panting Time," instead of "toiling after him in vain," might have walked on at his leisure, sure of finding him at any period of the day on the road to futurity. But

Bentham was not satisfied with his anticipated reputation ten thousand years hence. Having taken on himself the task of demolishing the "law as it is," and of constructing the "law as it ought to be," he wished to see the fruit of his labours "To-Day," as well as "To-Morrow." In countries where law and order were in a chaotic state, his writings were read, and he was supposed to be the Genius whose destiny was to blot out the PAST, to renovate the PRESENT, and to create the FUTURE. The echo of his fame was heard in England; and there came around him a small band of clever, consequential, and self-conceited men, who hailed him as "Master," called themselves his "Disciples," and said that if he would teach them, they would teach the public. Thus it was that Sir Francis Burdett wrote fawning notes to his "great and ever-honoured Master," asking to be crammed on the subject of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, charmed, he said, with the alliteration of "Bentham and Burdett," and exulting in the thought of floating down to immortality, "like a tomtit on an eagle's wing." Thus it was, that after Brougham, at the somewhat mature age of fifty years, had made a seven hours' speech on the IMPROVEMENT OF THE LAW, the good-natured old man, in the frolicsomeness of his self-conceit, wrote to him as his "dear little Master Harry," congratulated him on being "breeched," talked, with a rapturous but ludicrous

humour, of wishing to dandle him in his arms, and promised, as a reward for his exertions, to administer to him some more "pap" from the nursing bottle of his schemes of "Codification," and his projects for reconstructing all morals and all legislation. And thus it was, that he would write to the same "Master Harry," telling him to get together a "gang" of disciples, who were to enjoy the rare privilege of meeting at his table, to eat his victuals and suck his brains, and then to be dismissed at an early and a given hour, in the conceit that they were the "excellent of the earth," each of them playing either Plato or Aristotle to Bentham's Socrates. It is Burke who says, "Because half-a-dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; or that, after all, they are other than the little, shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour."

Let us not be unjust to Jeremy Bentham. He was a conscientious man, a character ever to be honoured in society, from whatever mental bias or moral principle the conscientiousness may proceed. Not to mention his refusal to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, because even in his youth he felt that he could not assent to them, he

retired from the exercise of what might have proved to him a very profitable profession, because he could not approve of its conventional practices. His father was a solicitor of repute; and by his command, he says, "I entered into the profession, and, in the year 1772, or thereabouts, was called to the Bar. Not long after, having drawn a bill in equity, I had to defend it against exceptions before a Master in Chancery. 'We shall have to attend on such a day,' said the solicitor to me, naming a day a week or so distant; 'warrants for our attendance will be taken out for two intervening days; but it is not customary to attend before the third.' What I learned afterwards was—that though no attendance more than *one* was ever bestowed, *three* were on every occasion regularly charged for; for each of the two falsely pretended attendances, the client being by the solicitor charged with a fee for himself, as also with a fee of six shillings and eightpence paid by him to the Master: the consequence was—that, for every attendance, the Master, instead of six shillings and eightpence received one pound; and that, even if inclined, no solicitor durst omit taking out the three warrants instead of one, for fear of the not-to-be-hazarded displeasure of that subordinate judge and his superiors. True it is, the solicitor is not under any *obligation* thus to charge his client for work not done. He is, however, sure of *indemnity* in doing so: it is accord-

ingly done of course. These things, and others of the same complexion, in such immense abundance, determined me to quit the profession; and, as soon as I could obtain my father's permission, I did so: I found it more to my taste to endeavour, as I have been doing ever since, to put an end to them than to profit by them."

The spirit indicated by this passage was as courageous as it was honest, for it was rare indeed. A far better and far higher feeling has, since Bentham's early days, been gradually animating the legal profession; and the process of improvement, though slow, has been sure, leading to a confident expectation, that, ere long, the CIVIL LAW of England may become as simple in its processes, and as unexpensive and expeditious in its nature, as the artificial forms of our civilization will permit.

Sir Samuel Romilly occupies a high position in the history of the amelioration of our CRIMINAL LAW. When he commenced his Parliamentary career, upwards of three hundred crimes were punishable with death, while the public mind, and public opinion, in and out of Parliament, leaned towards the exercise of severity rather than of mercy. Introducing his bills one by one, and persevering in his exertions from year to year, he gradually succeeded in changing the public feeling, and in softening the rigour of the law. His work was carried on by Sir James Mackintosh, who

raised annual discussions on the subject; his speech, on the 2nd of March, 1819, on his motion for a select committee to consider the Criminal Law, was characterised by Wilberforce as the most splendid effort of the kind he had ever heard in Parliament. In 1822 Lord Sidmouth, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, resigned, and was succeeded by Mr. Peel, who had been out of office since he had resigned the Irish Chief Secretaryship; and in the same year in which he entered on the arduous duties of Home Secretary, Sir James Mackintosh carried a motion in the House of Commons, "That this House will, at an early period of the next session of Parliament, take into their most serious consideration the means of increasing the efficacy of the criminal laws by abating their undue rigour."

Sir James Mackintosh renewed his motion in the following year; but Mr. Peel having intimated that the government were about to take up the matter, the "previous question" was moved and carried. During a subsequent period of the session, Mr. Peel brought in four bills to mitigate the severity of our criminal code, which were passed into law. The merit of these acts lay in the industry and care with which a complicated subject was revised; and though minor mitigations of the law had been carried in previous years, this was the first example of a wholesale official interference with a state of things so materially affecting

our national and social character. The course now entered upon by Mr. Peel was pursued during subsequent years; in 1825 he introduced, and procured to be passed, a very important act for consolidating and amending the laws relating to juries. In fact, the subject of an entire reform of the structure of our courts of common law and Chancery keenly excited public attention in the years 1824 and 1825; and several very animated debates were raised in the House of Commons on it, by Mr. Williams, now one of the judges of the Queen's Bench; and Mr. Abercromby, subsequently the Speaker, and now Lord Dunfermline; not to mention the subsequent and celebrated efforts of Mr. (Lord) Brougham, especially his famous speech, early in 1828, "On the State of the Law." This latter year—a remarkable and busy one—was characterised by still further improvements of the criminal law, particularly by the passing of the important act "for consolidating and amending the statutes in England relating to offences against the person;" as well as by a commission to inquire into the state of the law, which was the result of Mr. Brougham's efforts.

Another important mitigation of the criminal law was effected by Mr. Peel in 1830, when he brought in a bill to limit capital punishments in the case of forgery. The extreme severity of the laws against forgery defeated their object; the victims dying more pitied than blamed. Mr. Peel

did not go far enough for the House of Commons, which, at the instance of Sir James Mackintosh, introduced alterations in the bill, of which the Home Secretary did not approve. He was, however, supported by the House of Lords.

It would be grossly unjust not to allude to the still farther improvement of the Civil Law, and mitigation of the Criminal Law, effected while Lord John Russell was in the Home Office, especially in 1837. The entire subject is still in a progressive state.

In addition to Mr. Peel's labours in the improvement of the Criminal Law, may be mentioned his attention to the subject of police, especially the police of the metropolis. In 1828 the Quarterly Review exclaimed that "the whole of the existing watch system of London should be mercilessly struck to the ground;" and in that year, on Mr. Peel's motion, a select committee was appointed to inquire into the subject, whose inquiries tested the utter worthlessness of the old system, and led to the establishment of the Metropolitan Police Force —one of the greatest changes of modern times in the executive department of the Law.

CHAPTER V.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

"A prescriptive government, such as ours, never was the work of any legislator, never was made upon any foregone theory."—BURKE.

"The greatest innovation that could be introduced in the Constitution of England, was to come to a vote that there should be no innovation."—FOX.

"Shall the great county of York have no more members than the little county of Rutland? is the language of the petition of 1793. Shall so great, and populous, and manufacturing a county be no more numerously represented in the House of Commons than the borough of Shoreham, or Cricklade, or Midhurst, or finally than Old Sarum? are the apostrophes which have added zest to every debate, and a sting to every petition, from the year 1780 to the present day."—CANNING.

THE great change in our social condition which began shortly after the middle of the last century, early manifested itself in the tone and temper of the people. Our manufactures and our commerce, suddenly expanding with the new powers which chemical science and mechanical skill placed in our hands, caused our population to gather and concentrate themselves in localities favourable for carrying on that combined industry which is the peculiar characteristic of our modern manufacturing system; and while ancient boroughs, once in their time important, were sinking into decay,

and their privilege of sending members to the House of Commons had become a nominal right, really and actually vested in the lord of the manor or great landed proprietor of the locality, towns were rising in importance and population which had no right to return representatives. People began to inquire where was the Constitution? what was it like? in what form was it written down? and in what custody was the precious document kept? Reply was made, and Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and the Revolution of 1688, were pointed to; but this did not satisfy our matter-of-fact politicians, who wanted the constitution to be produced for their inspection, that they might judge of it, as they would judge of the model of a steam-engine, on which was labelled the maker's name, and the date of its construction. This inquisitorial and unimaginative spirit was increased by well-meant but injudicious attempts to explain everything to the perfect satisfaction of the dullest capacity; and thus the public mind was treated as injudicious parents sometimes treat the morbid curiosity of their children—the mother, the De Lolme of the household, trying to soothe down inquiry with reasons which are intended rather to silence than to satisfy; while the paternal Bentham, scorning fallacy, and disdaining what he thinks unmanly subterfuge, tries to arm the budding intellect with edge tools, and teaches it to break to pieces what it cannot comprehend.

It was much forgotten that the British Constitution, like the British oak, had grown up, nobody rightly knew how, and that from age to age it had increased its bulk, and put forth its branches, amid storms and changes, now in danger of being uprooted and blown over, now lopped, trimmed, its bark peeled, and occasionally the axe uplifted to cut it down; but still standing, and gradually becoming a great tree, under which all might shelter. Those who asked where the Constitution was to be found, might have seen it wherever they went, and on whatever they looked; in old cathedrals, in the courts of law, in our old corporations, our venerable towns; in the monarchy, in the Houses of Parliament, the judges of the land, the aristocracy, and the people; everything proclaiming to the PRESENT that the PAST had been, and manifesting how much of real happiness, of greatness, and of glory might be found flourishing under an incongruous mass of prescriptive habits and customs, of uncouth legislation, and even under exacting authority and unreflecting obedience. And much angry contention, much bitter strife, much harassing and needless agitation, might have been spared, if men had early come to the plain, the definite understanding that the constitution grew with the people, and not the people by and for the constitution; instead of dividing the community into those who resisted all change as incompatible with the safety and se-

curity of our social existence, and those who insisted on perpetual and incessant change as the vivifying principle of our social atmosphere.

Before the American war of independence was proclaimed, the approaching great change in our social condition was indicated by the struggle between the House of Commons and the public, in which the latter, though apparently defeated, were signally triumphant. This was the war between privilege and printing; the debate between the House of Commons on the one hand, as to its right of keeping its debates and its proceedings under the shadow of concealment, and the printers, on the other, who found in the growing curiosity of the public a sufficient pecuniary incentive to dare the prohibitions and the privileges of the Commons. It was in the year 1771 that the printers triumphed; when Crosby, the Lord Mayor of London, and Aldermen Oliver and Wilkes, backed the printers and braved the House. The printer, arrested by the authority of the Serjeant-at-arms, was liberated by the city magistrates; and Alderman Oliver, fearless of the Tower, and conscious of popular sympathy, stood up in his place in the House, and boldly declared that "he owned and gloried in the fact laid to his charge; he knew that whatever punishment was intended, nothing he could say could avert it. As for himself, he was perfectly unconcerned; and as he expected little from their justice, he defied their

power." The indignant House voted that the contumacious Alderman, and afterwards the Lord Mayor, should be both sent to the Tower; a vote which obtained the sanction of Fox, who declared, "I am for sending those magistrates to the Tower; I stand up for the Constitution, not for the people; if the people attempt to invade the Constitution, they are enemies to the nation."

The House of Commons maintained its authority, and asserted its privileges; and yet from that hour the public practically secured the right of having the debates published—a mighty change indeed. To the honour of Fox be it recorded, that though in 1771 he voted for sending the magistrates to the Tower, he afterwards steadily supported the expediency and necessity of permitting the public to know regularly what was done by their representatives in Parliament; and, along with Burke, repudiated the exercise, at least ungraciously, of the power of excluding strangers from the House. At the same time he was not, at this early period, so broad in his concessions to popular power as he afterwards became. "The only point," he said, in 1771, "to be discussed is, whether the people at large, or this House, are the best judges of the public welfare? For my part, I shall not hesitate to pronounce positively in favour of this House. What acquaintance have the people at large with the arcana of political rectitude, with the connections of kingdoms,

the resources of national strength, the abilities of ministers, *or even with their own dispositions ?*"

The triumph of the public over the House of Commons, manifested both in the great struggle in the case of Wilkes, and in the tacit permission to publish the debates, was not allowed to remain a barren victory. The growing democratic spirit was irritated by complaints of distress and general decay—a singular complaint, it would seem, in the very infancy and rapid growth of our modern manufacturing system. But that system, out of which has come so powerful an accession to the strength of democracy, has been, from its very birth, exposed to periodical fluctuations of prosperity and distress; and every period of distress has been a season of political excitement, and demand for political change. At that early period, in the very midst of an expanding commerce, and an increasing manufacturing production—at that time when merchants were making fortunes, shopkeepers growing rich, and towns expanding, there was a cry of distress and approaching ruin; a cry proceeding from that temporary derangement of our commercial and manufacturing channels of intercourse and industry produced by the growing American discontents, and the approaching American war of independence. Fox, in 1771, was but twenty-two years of age, and moreover a junior lord of the Admiralty: he could not therefore be expected to see far below the

surface, when he met the complaint of distress with an eulogium of prosperity, in the following terms:—

"Observe the magnificence of our metropolis—the extent of our empire—the immensity of our commerce—the opulence of our people. Survey the *unfortunate* citizens of London, and you will find every shopkeeper of any consideration with his elegant villa, and his variety of equipages. To show you farther the *ruined* state of the kingdom, let me remind you that our territories occupy *no more* than the largest, the most valuable space of any European dominion in the four quarters of the globe; that our trade is proportioned to the superiority of empire; and that our subjects, from the burning regions of Hindostan to the chilling mountains of Canada, exceed the subjects of every other power in greatness of wealth and certainty of freedom. These are the proofs of our *declining* fortune! May our calamities of this kind hourly increase, though the people should still continue to murmur! and may we always remain the happiest nation under heaven, however offended our patriots may be because we are not happier than is consistent with the lot of humanity!"

The American war of independence raised the momentous questions of TAXATION and REPRESENTATION, not to mention the deeper matters of rights of men, rights of nations, the limits of obedience, and the duty of resistance. This war,

therefore, stirred the entire public mind of England; and bringing with it not only disaster and difficulty, but taxation and distress, gave birth to that demand for a change in our REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM, which, after a struggle of half a century, ended in the Reform Bill. From the year 1780 the popular discontent took the shape of an agitation first for executive, and then for general and constitutional reform. Delegates from associated counties petitioned for redress of grievances in 1781; and individual members of the House of Commons, as Alderman Sawbridge, took to a particular *line*, such as that of persevering from year to year with motions for shortening the duration of Parliaments, and of extending the suffrage. Burke, however, who had been mainly instrumental in liberalising the ideas of Fox, could never bring himself to join in the Reform agitation: his mind, looking more to the past than to the future, and deeply imbued with the importance of stability, resisted all constitutional change, even while he was an able, a zealous, and an effective executive reformer. "Mr. Speaker," he exclaimed, in 1782, "we have now discovered, at the close of the eighteenth century, that the constitution of England, which for a series of ages had been the proud distinction of this country, always the admiration, and sometimes the envy, of the wise and learned in every other nation—we have discovered that this boasted constitution, in the most boasted part of it, is a

gross imposition upon the understanding of mankind, an insult to their feelings, and acting by contrivances destructive to the best and most valuable interests of the people." And fretting at all the agitation which then excited the public mind, he added, with something like impatient remonstrance, "The constitution of England is never to have a quietus; it is to be continually vilified, attacked, reproached, resisted; instead of being the hope and sure anchor in all storms, instead of being the means of redress to all grievances, itself is the grand grievance of the nation, our shame instead of our glory."

Far otherwise from Burke thought the Duke of Richmond, who, going beyond even his most liberal associates, and anticipating the Chartists of the present day, propounded, in 1781, a scheme, in the shape of a bill, which, if carried into effect, would have cut up our ancient borough representative system by the roots, and produced a change that would infallibly have converted this country into a republic at the time of the French revolution, and perhaps have made Great Britain a dependancy of France, under Napoleon Bonaparte. The Duke of Richmond's proposal was to divide the country into five hundred electoral districts, each with an equal population, returning one member; to make elections annual; and to confer *universal suffrage*, by giving a vote to every male person of twenty-one years of age who was

not incapacitated by lunacy, pauperism, or crime. Fox bore testimony to the Duke of Richmond's motives in bringing forward this measure; "he could not, he owned, subscribe to all the parts of that bill, but he was convinced that the noble peer meant it for the public good." The public good it would not certainly have promoted; for there is every probability that, had parliament been so besotted as to confer universal suffrage on the people of this country at that time, we should have been involved in the whirlpool of the French revolution, and either have been led to set up a republic, to struggle and perish, ending in a despotism, or else have been compelled to submit to Napoleon Bonaparte, and been converted into an appendage of France. Some palliation of the Duke of Richmond's liberalism may be found in the consideration that we were then in the new-birth of rational liberty and rights of man; and that in recognising so fully, and, as it would have proved, so fatally, the popular power, it could not then be foreseen that our manufacturing population would have accumulated in those dense, restless, concentrated masses of half knowledge and whole ignorance which they present at the present day.

The great Earl of Chatham saw the social changes which were going on in his time, and acknowledged a necessity for an addition to the representation: he proposed to add a hundred members to the House of Commons. His son

William Pitt, who entered parliament in 1780, was an ardent parliamentary reformer, and repeatedly endeavoured to obtain the consent of the legislature to his projects of change. His last effort was in 1785, after he had become prime minister: he then proposed to disfranchise thirty-six decayed boroughs, each returning two members, and to give seventy-two additional members to the counties and the metropolis. But he did not bring his authority and influence as a minister to the aid of his scheme: he merely brought forward his motion to assert his consistency; and being defeated by 248 to 174, as well as knowing that George the Third was as resolutely opposed to parliamentary reform as to Catholic emancipation, he not only abandoned his advocacy for the future, but resisted it when brought forward by others; alleging, indeed, not principle, but expediency, for his opposition.

Two years afterwards, namely, in 1787, Earl Grey, then Mr. Grey, came into the House of Commons, and from the very outset distinguished himself. He took up the subject of parliamentary reform, which he never abandoned, until, at last, in his old age, he was the head of the government by which it was carried. During the excitement produced by the French revolution, he occupied a conspicuous position amongst the then able advocates of reform, Fox, Sheridan, Whitbread,

Erskine, &c.; and, in 1793, acting as the parliamentary mouthpiece of the society called "The Friends of the People," excited a celebrated debate. The part taken by Burke at this period caused a disruption of all his old associations: his famous quarrel with Fox is known to every reader: and there can be little doubt that the fearful horrors of the French revolution, painted with the glowing pencil of Burke, had a mighty influence on the upper and middle classes, and threw back for forty years the idea of any change in the construction of the House of Commons. "It is truly alarming," said Burke to the Duke of Portland, "to see so large a part of the aristocratic interest engaged in the cause of the new species of democracy which is openly attacking, or secretly undermining, the system of property by which mankind has hitherto been governed." But even if a considerable "part of the aristocratic interest" did approve of parliamentary reform, their influence in the House of Commons was small; Mr. Grey, in 1797, could only muster ninety-one to support him, in a debate in which Fox, Erskine, Burdett, and others, tried eloquence and wit on an audience steeled against the conclusion to be drawn. Fox, in that year, seeing the utter hopelessness of continuing a contest with ministers, announced an intention of withdrawing from the House altogether, which he put in prac-

tice for several years, still retaining his seat for Westminster; and in this he was imitated, temporarily, by Grey, Sheridan, Whitbread, &c.

While the upper and middle classes were thus triumphing over all attempts to effect a change in the constitution, a considerable portion of the humbler classes, restless, dissatisfied, and inflamed by ardent ideas of theoretical perfection, rights of man, liberty, and what not, formed themselves into clubs and societies, whose proceedings were not guided by discretion, nor the speeches of their orators marked by prudence. The "burning lava" of French atheism had flowed onwards, till it scorched the public mind of England; and the bulk of those who called themselves Reformers were led into the approving of sentiments, and into the sanctioning of proceedings, which could not fail to alarm the religious, the cautious, the selfish, and the powerful. At the same time impartial history must record that POWER, being in FEAR, was guilty of straining JUSTICE, in order to repress what it considered dangerous in the practices of the agitators of that day; and therefore, when, in 1794, the subject of the transportation of Muir and Palmer, "the Scotch Martyrs," was brought before the House of Commons, Fox had some justification for his warmth when he exclaimed, "Until such time as there is a law to send me to Botany Bay for publicly avowing my sentiments, I shall think it a duty incumbent on me to condemn the actions

of those in power, whenever they may, as in the present instance, call forth the execration of mankind. If England, unhappily, relapsing into despotism, should ever be governed by such principles, then farewell, a long farewell, to our boasted freedom."

From 1797 down to 1815 the history of Parliamentary Reform is nearly a blank. Other questions occupied public attention; the war, taxation, the Union with Ireland, Wilberforce's persevering efforts for the abolition of the Slave Trade, Catholic Emancipation, and so forth. Not that the question of Reform was dead and buried. Sir Francis Burdett, in particular, kept it alive in the popular mind: it was his interference in a contest between the House of Commons and a Debating Club which brought about his committal to the Tower, and the turmoil in which London was kept by that event. Gale Jones, the president of a club called the British Forum, was sent to Newgate, because the club had announced an intention of discussing some order or vote of the House of Commons; and Sir Francis Burdett, denouncing the assumed power of the House, and writing a saucy letter to the Speaker, was ordered to the Tower. He refused to obey the Speaker's warrant: the populace of London, risking life and limb, took his part, and filled the street by day and night to prevent his capture; but captured at last he was, carried off to the Tower, and the matter ultimately ended in smoke.

After the peace, the terrible re-actions of commerce caused by the collapse of a paper currency, the sudden transitions of demand, and the fluctuations of the seasons, aggravated by a stringent corn-law, brought about fearful misery to the dense masses of our manufacturing districts, and wild schemes of reform were agitated in their minds. A dim kind of half knowledge was fermenting in their brains: they were roused by the sufferings which they endured from the mighty fluctuations in commerce, the uncertainty of employment, and the high prices of food; and the vicious infidelity of the French Revolution, like the evil spirit which had been cast out, re-entered and took possession. Atheism, deism, insane blasphemy, and stupid but dangerous sedition, became the mental food on which they lived. Secret societies sprang up; secret drillings were practised; and the manufacturing workmen of Lancashire and Lanarkshire prepared themselves by nightly trainings for the Revolution which they considered to be fast approaching, in which they were to act a conspicuous part, and derive, as they supposed, a corresponding benefit. Every existing institution was threatened: a people approving of atheism or deism could have no need of a Church; a people objecting to taxation, and suffering under privation, would, if they had the power, speedily "spunge" out the National Debt; and groaning under a heavy expenditure, caused, as they ima-

gined, by "kingcraft," they would not be long in upsetting the monarchy, if they could only lay hands on it. Once more, as in the time of the French Revolution, POWER was troubled with FEAR; and stimulated by the Spa-fields riot in London, &c. ministers came to Parliament and asked for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and other extraordinary powers. "They had," said Lord Liverpool, in 1817, "proofs of a system to overthrow the constitution of the country; and when they saw such a system, with malignant spirits to set it in full motion, was it too much to ask them to intrust the Legislature with powers at least adequate to its suppression? He thought the seditious and blasphemous intercourse of the conspirators more dangerous than in 1794: the conspirators of these days borrowed some lessons from the conspirators of those; they acted by word of mouth, by signs, by concealed and undefinable but understood ways. He felt the full importance of the question; he was prepared to meet it; and he would suffer no odium to frighten him from the stern path of duty. He felt, what was more, the necessity of preserving the constitution; of, in fact, preserving to every man his fireside; and on these grounds he asked, for a very short time, the powers which were indispensable to the salvation of the state."

These were the sentiments of the head of the Government—a mild, good man; and partly from

necessity, partly through mistake, we were ushered into a REIGN OF TERROR, as bad almost as the disastrous year 1794. "The whole country," said Earl Grey, "was placed out of the pale of the constitution;" the employment of government spies was vindicated; Cobbett fled to the United States, to avoid, he said, the operation of the "Six Acts;" in 1819 occurred the unhappy affair of "Peterloo," a meeting of many thousands of Lancashire spinners, weavers, and other workmen, attended by women and children, all marching in procession to St. Peter's-field, Manchester, which was violently and with bloodshed dispersed by the yeomanry acting under the authority of the magistrates; and in 1820 occurred the horrible conspiracy of Thistlewood and his gang, a set of desperate adventurers who had banded themselves to attack and assassinate the Cabinet Ministers while assembled at dinner with the Earl of Harrowby. While power was thus exerting itself in suppressing attempts to disturb the public peace, a voluntary association, which was nicknamed "the Bridge-street Gang," undertook the prosecution and punishment of persons engaged in writing and selling atheistical and seditious publications; and by the somewhat improper and arbitrary, if not illegal, method of their procedure, still more inflamed the public mind against the constituted authorities.

The demand for "Radical Reform," backed by such ominous threats as "Equal Representation

or Death" (an inscription on a "Peterloo" flag), was not likely to obtain many supporters in the House of Commons. But as the "reign of terror" drew to its conclusion, a reform of the representation became once more a question; and a new advocate appeared, whose character and position was calculated to attract attention. This was Lord John Russell, who had been now some time in Parliament; and who, from his attainments and connections, was decidedly a "rising" man. His earlier efforts were directed towards the prevention, the suppression, and the punishment of "bribery and corruption" in the election of members; practices which had supplied congenial topics for the inimitable sarcasm of Hogarth, and which had occupied the hopeless and the frequently helpless attention of Parliament, from time to time, through a long course of years. Burke, in 1780, computed the expense of the previous general election at £1,500,000, which, he said, was "three shillings in the pound more than the Land Tax." He used, as an argument against the shortening of the duration of Parliaments, that in Ireland, where the experiment had been tried, the price of a seat in the Irish House of Commons had risen from £1500 to £2500; and he thus gave his reminiscences of English elections:—"About the close," said he, "of the last Parliament, and the beginning of this, several agents for boroughs went about, and I well remember that it was in

every one of their mouths, 'Sir, your election will cost you three thousand pounds if you are independent; but if the Ministry supports you, it may be done for two, and perhaps for less.'"

Lord John Russell successfully managed the disfranchisement of the borough of Grampound, in Cornwall, for corruption somewhat too notorious; and in 1822 he brought on the first regular and remarkable debate on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, which had been entertained in the House of Commons for a long previous period. Mr. Canning, on this occasion, made a long but a somewhat unsatisfactory speech, in which he professed his willingness to go the length of giving additional representatives to some manufacturing counties or towns by withdrawing the franchise from boroughs convicted of corruption. But Mr. Canning, with all his brilliant abilities, was deficient in largeness and consistency of statesmanship: while devoting his life to the advocacy of the Catholic claims, he refused to vote for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; and though admitting that defects existed in the representation, he opposed their removal, except by the minutest operation. "I am asked," he said, in 1827, when raised to his brief premiership, "what I mean to do on the subject of Parliamentary Reform? Why, I say, to oppose it—to oppose it to the end of my life in this House, as hitherto I have done."

In 1828 the defective state of the representation was brought prominently before the public, by discussions on bills "to prevent corruption in elections;" the disfranchisement of East Retford became the battle-field on which the whole question was fought; in 1829 Catholic Emancipation was carried; and in 1830 the Wellington-Peel administration began to totter. The carrying of Catholic Emancipation had utterly alienated the great body of the party with which the Duke and Mr. Peel had hitherto been in such strict alliance, and whose confidence they had hitherto so completely enjoyed. The very carrying, too, of that measure, instead of cooling down the fever of excitement, seemed only to have increased it; much had been gained, more was required. The strongest opponents of the Catholic claims now looked on with indifference at the rising feeling in favour of Parliamentary Reform; and though resolutions directed against the existence of "rotten boroughs" were rejected by 401 to 118 at the close of the session of 1829, the subject, in the ensuing year, was looked upon in a somewhat different spirit. To be sure, Lord John Russell could only obtain 140 to support him in asking for leave to bring in a bill to give representatives to Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham; and 117 in pledging themselves to a scheme of moderate reform; and O'Connell, who was becoming familiar with the air of the House of Commons, had

only 13 supporters to a rather bold proposal that he should obtain leave to bring in a bill to establish Triennial Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, and Vote by Ballot. But the country was in distress (DISTRESS and REFORM have been inseparable companions): there was much talk and clamour about retrenchment, and Sir James Graham signalized himself by motions on that subject: the administration, which had been reposing alternately on Whigs and Tories for support, found both withdrawing—the one party in revenge for the past, the other in hope for the future; and meantime the government was vainly endeavouring to prop itself up in public opinion by prosecutions for libels.

War was openly declared between the Whigs and the administration, while the Tory party, moody and irritated, stood aloof, and marked the contest. The Duke of Wellington intimated that if government were left in a minority it would resign; and Brougham, in one of his tearing fits of savage humour, seized on the idea, to make furious mirth with it. "The day of force has gone by," he exclaimed: "he who would rule this country by royal favour, or by military power, may be hurled down from his height. Him I accuse not—I accuse *you* (addressing the ministerial benches), his flatterers, his mean, fawning parasites!" Sir Robert Peel (his father was recently dead, and he had succeeded to the title) started up, and said, "I ask the honourable and

learned member if he means to accuse me of being such? The honourable and learned gentleman addressed himself to this side of the House, and said, 'I mean to accuse *you*, his flatterers, his fawning parasites.' I am sitting on this side of the House; I am the representative of the opinions of those who sit here; but I put the question to the honourable and learned gentleman—not on their behalf, but as an individual—and I ask, does he presume to say of me, that I am the mean, fawning parasite of any man?" To this manly but temperate interrogation Brougham made a somewhat awkward reply, disclaiming any personal imputation, but maintaining in general terms the language he had used: whereupon Sir Robert Peel, with remarkable propriety and temper, accepted the qualified apology. Brougham, he said, had "a perfect right to attack ministers, but he had no right to accuse men of being flatterers who were as independent as he was. It was a bad example to set. But he would make the retractation for the honourable and learned gentleman. He was convinced that the expressions were not intended to apply to him, and that they were uttered in the warmth of debate, increased by interruption."

Two events, critical in the condition of the country and the state of parties, happened about the same period of the year—the French second Revolution, and the death of George the Fourth.

Sparks from the "Three Days" of Paris fell upon the thatched roof of English feeling, and set it on fire; and in the excited state of the public mind a general election took place. While the combined Whig and Radical party, united on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, roused up all their power to oppose the ministry, the Tory party, unable to conceal their aversion, either looked on with passive indifference, or else took an active part in opposition. The Wellington-Peel administration was compared to the Polignac ministry, whose despotic measures had brought about the French Revolution, and had driven Charles the Tenth from the throne of France: O'Connell in Ireland, and Brougham in Yorkshire, rung the *tocsin*, and called on a "mighty people" to gather together against tyranny, oppression, and arbitrary rule. Meantime, the rural population began to engage in a *jacquerie;* and an insurrection, commencing in Kent, spread through Hants, Wilts, Bucks, Sussex, and Surrey; bands of incendiaries lit up the country with the flames of corn-stacks, barns, farm-buildings, and destroyed live-stock; mills were attacked; machinery destroyed; threatening letters were circulated, demanding an increase in wages, and commanding a disuse of machinery. While such was the state of the country, the towns were no less excited: the "Political Union" of Birmingham, constructed somewhat after the model of the Catholic Associa-

tion, acting as a "central heart" of political excitement and agitation, made the "fevered blood" to throb to the extremities of the empire.

In such a state of the country, and in such a temper of the public mind, the new Parliament assembled, towards the close of 1830. Earl Grey, in the House of Lords, in the debate on the address, adverted to Parliamentary Reform. "He had been," he said, "a reformer all his life, and at no period had he been inclined to go farther than he would be prepared to go now, if the opportunity were offered. But he did not found it on abstract right. We were told that every man who paid taxes, nay, that every man arrived at years of discretion, had a right to vote for representatives. The existence of such a right he utterly denied. The right of the people was, to have a good government, one calculated to secure their privileges and happiness; and if that was incompatible with universal, or very general, suffrage, then the limitation, and not the extension, was the true right of the people."

The reply of the Duke of Wellington to these observations is memorable; the downfall of his administration was precipitated by it. "The noble earl," he said, "has alluded to something in the shape of a Parliamentary Reform, but he has been candid enough to acknowledge that he is not prepared with any measure of reform; and I have as little scruple to say, that his Majesty's govern-

ment is as totally unprepared as the noble lord. Nay, on my own part, I will go farther, and say, that I have never read or heard of any measure, up to the present moment, which could in any degree satisfy my mind that the state of the representation could be improved, or be rendered more satisfactory to the country at large than at the present moment. I will not, however, at such an unseasonable time, enter upon the subject, or excite discussion; but I shall not hesitate to declare unequivocally what are my sentiments upon it. I am fully convinced that the country possesses at the present moment a legislature which answers all the good purposes of legislation, and this to a greater degree than any legislature ever has answered in any country whatever. I will go further and say, that the legislature, and the system of representation, possess the full and entire confidence of the country, deservedly possess that confidence, and the discussions in the legislature have a very great influence over the opinions of the country. I will go still farther, and say, that if at the present moment I had imposed upon me the duty of forming a legislature for any country, and particularly for a country like this, in possession of great property of various descriptions, I do not mean to assert that I would form such a legislature as we possess now, for the nature of man was incapable of reaching it at once; but my great endeavour would be to form some description of

legislature which would produce the same results. The representation of the people at large at present contains a large body of the property of the country, in which the landed interests have a preponderating influence. Under these circumstances, I am not prepared to bring forward any measure of the description alluded to by the noble lord. I am not only not prepared to bring forward any measure of this nature, but I will at once declare that, as far as I am concerned, as long as I hold any station in the government of the country, I shall always feel it my duty to resist such measures when proposed by others."

Had this bold and manly avowal of opinion been uttered *before* Catholic Emancipation, it would have had a prodigious influence; but *after* it, and in the excited state of the country, it was clearly too late—unequivocally ill-timed! The country was roused by it, for it was a proclamation of eternal war against that Reform on which their hearts were now set. Lord Althorp (Earl Spencer) announced, on behalf of the Whig party, "No confidence" in the ministry; and Brougham exclaimed that it was "the feeblest that had ever before been seen, under any combination of circumstances; hardly sufficient for the ordinary routine of office in the calmest times." This was not all. Sir Edward Knatchbull, who might be considered the embodied personation of ultra-Tory *stand-still-ism* (now Paymaster of the Forces in

the Peel administration), declared that *he*, too, had no confidence, and appealed to Mr. Hume, the ultra Radical *move-on-ist*, to aid him in the expression of his dislike. And Mr. Hume, nothing loth, announced that, though approving of the government for their past conduct in relation to Emancipation, &c., he was now utterly dissatisfied, and could be securely calculated on.

This combination of political opposition was aided by an accidental and unfortunate circumstance. William IV., on the occasion of the first lord mayor's day after his accession to the throne, had been invited, with his queen, to dine with the citizens of London in Guildhall. Dark rumours reached Sir Robert Peel, in the shape of anonymous or unauthorised letters, that an attempt would be made to create a tumult on the occasion of the royal procession into the city; and the lord mayor elect wrote to the Duke of Wellington, advising him to come "strongly and sufficiently guarded," as an attempt would be made "to make an attack on his grace's person, on his approach to the Hall." The royal visit was postponed; alarm spread, fear exaggerated, and terror was in the ascendant; the funds fell three per cent., and "in the provinces every man expected that the next mail would bring intelligence of London being in insurrection."

In the midst of all the wild excitement, Sir Henry Parnell (late Lord Congleton) moved an

amendment on the civil list proposed by ministers for the new reign. It was, "That a select committee be appointed to take into consideration the estimates and accounts presented by command of his Majesty regarding the Civil List." The debate was brief, but ministers were defeated by a majority of twenty-nine, there being 233 to 204. This was on the 15th of November, 1830; and on the next day, the Duke of Wellington in the Lords, and Sir Robert Peel in the Commons, announced the fall of the Wellington-Peel administration.

Earl Grey was now commissioned to form an administration, the principles of which were announced to be "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform." It is worth while exhibiting here the names of the new ministry, destined to accomplish so great a change in the constitution and governmental character of the country :—

Earl Grey, First Lord of the Treasury.

Lord Althorp (Earl Spencer), Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Brougham, elevated to the peerage, Lord Chancellor.

Lord Melbourne, Home Secretary.

Lord Palmerston, Foreign Secretary.

Lord Goderich (Earl of Ripon), Colonial Secretary.

Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty.

Marquis of Lansdowne, President of the Council.

Lord Durham, Lord Privy Seal.

Mr. Charles Grant (Lord Glenelg), President of the Board of Control.

The Duke of Richmond, Postmaster-General.

Lord John Russell, Paymaster of the Forces.

Lord Holland, Duchy of Lancaster.

Lord Auckland, President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Poulett Thomson (late Lord Sydenham), Vice-President of the Board of Trade, and Treasurer of the Navy.

Mr. (Lord) Denman, Attorney-General.

Mr. (Lord) Stanley, Chief Secretary for Ireland (Marquis of Anglesea, Lord Licutenant).

Lord Plunket, Lord Chancellor.

Every name in this list, with a single exception or two, was the name of a man of ability, and not a few of them of distinguished reputation. The ministry was therefore calculated to excite very great expectation in the public mind, and its advent to power was therefore hailed with the loudest applause. The only untoward circumstance at the outset was the defeat of Mr. (Lord) Stanley, in attempting to be re-elected for Preston, on his acceptance of office. He was opposed by the demagogue Hunt, of "Peterloo" and agitating celebrity; and the suffrage in Preston being peculiar, almost universal, Hunt triumphed over the

heir of the house of Derby. Meantime, Parliament was adjourned from the 23rd December, 1830, till the 3rd of February, 1831, in order to give the new ministry time to concoct their plans, especially the great measure of Parliamentary Reform, to which they were so irrevocably pledged.

The Houses met on the appointed day; Earl Grey announced that a plan of Parliamentary Reform had been prepared; Lord John Russell, on the 1st of March, introduced it; a debate of seven days ensued; and then leave was given to bring in three bills for the reform of the representation of England, Scotland, and Ireland. By this time the Tory party was roused, and on the second reading of the English Reform Bill it was only carried by a majority of ONE—302 to 301. Emboldened by this, the party rallied, for there were many friends of moderate reform, who were startled into timidity by the ministerial scheme; and when General Gascoyne moved that the number of representatives for England and Wales ought not to be diminished, his motion was supported by 299 to 291. Whereupon Parliament was dissolved.

And now ensued another terrific scene of excitement all over the country; and as the French and Belgian revolutions had had an electric influence on the general election of the preceding year, the Polish insurrection acted sympathetically on the present one. The new Parliament met in June; the English Reform Bill was carried, in

the House of Commons, on a second reading, by 367 to 251; after a farther desperate struggle, it was brought up to the Lords; and the Lords, on the second reading, and after a debate of five nights, threw it out by a majority of forty-one: 199 to 158. The House of Commons voted entire confidence in the Ministry, and regret that the Lords should have thrown out the Bill. Parliament was prorogued, with the announcement that Reform would again be submitted to its consideration. The country, however, did not confine itself to agitation, displays of physical force, loud threats, and angry expostulations; there were riots at Derby and Nottingham, and towards the close of the year Bristol was sacked, and partly burned, with a fearful loss of life, by a furious mob.

Burke, during the alarm produced by French republicanism, assailed Fox, Grey, and their associates, because they sought, under "a pretended reform, a real revolution." Had he lived till 1832 he would have seen a *real* reform carried by a *real* revolution. For there was no parallel to the state of things since 1688. The House of Lords overborne; threatened with a swamping of their will by a numerous creation of Peers; the ministry resigning, and a hopeless effort by the Tory party to construct an administration, which lasted a few days, and was then scared into flight; and the Reform Ministry, who had merely made a show of

laying down their powers, carried triumphantly through the crisis by the trumpet-shout of the popular will. These were grand, spirit-stirring, but awful times: a country like Britain cannot enjoy them oftener than once a century (if so often) without danger of bursting the dyke which hems in law, order, and social security.

And so, in 1832, was the Reform Bill carried—three bills for the three kingdoms—carried in spite of obstinate resistance, lengthened debate, eloquent outpourings, and the exercise of a marvellous patience in the Legislature—but not carried in all the fulness and integrity of the original plan. Nevertheless, fifty-six English boroughs, each with a population below 2000, and all collectively returning one hundred and eleven members, were disfranchised; and thirty boroughs lost a member each, because they came within the rule laid down, of having a population each under 4000. The entire number of members struck off the list of representatives was thus 141, to which two others were added, from the united boroughs of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, hitherto returning four;—and in lieu of the number thus struck off, there were 43 new boroughs created, 22 of which contained each a population of 25,000 and upwards, and were empowered to return two members each; and 21 containing each 12,000 inhabitants and upwards, and each returning one member. The remainder were distributed amongst the counties, the whole making

up an equivalent for the number struck off, the entire number of representatives remaining unaltered. We need not speak of the alterations of the representative system in Scotland and Ireland; nor of the extension of the elective franchise, by which a mighty accession of power was given to the people, and the anomalies of our representative system swept away.

No more close boroughs; no more buying and selling of seats; and no longer such monstrosities as Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, or Sheffield without representatives, while petty places, and a handful of needy individuals, poured into Parliament "representatives of the people." The Reform Acts, with the little subsidiary acts which have been since passed, have not indeed rendered our representative system perfect; influence, bribery, corruption, and intimidation still prevail, and tares have grown up with the wheat. But to bring our representative system a little nearer to perfection, something more is required than Acts of Parliament: the MORAL CHARACTER of the people has to be elevated, which is more likely to be effected by the quiet operation of other causes, working through a series of years, than by uneasily tinkering the franchise or the electoral system. And those who are still fretful on the subject, should ever bear in mind that our old system was *not* an unmixed evil; that by means of "rotten boroughs" some of our ablest and best men were

introduced into the House of Commons; and that such a man as Romilly was enabled to maintain his independence and his usefulness, because he bought his seat from the "patron" in hard cash, an open and mutual bargain. "Look at myself," said Sir Francis Burdett, early in 1830: "I have gone through the whole process under the present system of representation, and a most ruinous one it has been. Early in life I came into this house in order to defend the constitution of England. I purchased my seat of a boroughmonger. He was no patron of mine: he took my money, and by purchase I obtained a right to speak in the most public place in England. With my views, and with my love of the liberty of my country, I did not grudge the sacrifice I had made for that commanding consideration. If I had abused the right I thus purchased, and passed through corruption to the honours of the peerage, I should not enjoy the satisfaction I now feel."

CHAPTER VI.

Reign and Ruin of Whig-Radicalism.

"I never liked this continual talk of resistance and revolution, or the practice of making the extreme medicine of the constitution its daily bread. It renders the habit of society dangerously valetudinary: it is taking periodical doses of mercury sublimate, and swallowing down repeated provocatives of cantharides to our love of liberty. For this distemper of remedy, grown habitual, relaxes and wears out, by a vulgar and prostituted use, the spring of that spirit which is to be exerted on great occasions."—Burke.

"Our lot is happily cast in the temperate zone of freedom: the clime best suited to the development of the moral qualities of the human race; to the cultivation of their faculties, and to the security as well as the improvement of their virtues:—a clime not exempt indeed from variations of the elements, but variations which purify while they agitate the atmosphere that we breathe. Let us be sensible of the advantages which it is our happiness to enjoy—let us guard with pious gratitude the flame of genuine liberty, that fire from heaven, of which our constitution is the holy depository; and let us not, for the chance of rendering it more intense and more radiant, impair its purity or hazard its extinction."—Canning.

Mr. Tierney, whose peculiar powers of sarcastic humour, and unquestioned abilities, had long made him a conspicuous public man, died in the beginning of the year 1830; and towards the close of the year Mr. Huskisson met with the melancholy accident which terminated his valuable life. But there still remained in both Houses of Parliament

individuals who had been the personal friends and associates of Pitt and Fox, of whom, amongst the Whig party, Earl Grey was the most conspicuous. He had a high reputation for a rigid inflexibility of character, and a stern consistency of purpose—qualities in him which had mainly contributed to the downfall of the Whig administration of 1806-7, and had led to the failure of the Marquis Wellesley in 1812 to form an administration. His capacity and abilities had been tested and exhibited from his very entrance on public life, in the year 1787; and he still maintained in his old age the respect and position which he had secured in his youth.

The Whig party comprehended, as every party must comprehend, men of different shades of political opinion, and of various degrees of political honesty. Some who hung upon its skirts could scarcely be brought under any particular denomination; they were as much moderate Tories, as moderate Whigs. Others entertained opinions which brought them to the verge of Radicalism; while others again were somewhat time-servers, ready to advance or recede, as circumstances and popular opinion might appear to indicate. With Earl Grey and others, there were two great objects to be achieved—Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform; and these accomplished, no farther movement was contemplated, except in those social and executive improvements of law

and administration which any enlightened man, Whig or Tory, might advocate.

But tacked on to the Whig party was the Radical party—a motley host: Some were stern Benthamites—men who reasoned out their principles, and had them "cut and dry," by the most rigid laws of pure logic; and whose minds were cast in that philosophic mould, that they could, if their principles led to it as a necessity, use St. Paul's for a whipping top, and re-tailor the Constitution as adroitly as a milliner remodels a dress. Others again were mere loose Radicals, floating on the surface of popular opinion, without fixed ideas, and, like hot metal, ready to flow into any mould. To these must be added the Irish Roman Catholic members, or Irish Protestant members representing Roman Catholic constituencies; the character and conduct of many of whom amply justified Burke's prophetic fear, that the constant agitation of the question of Catholic Emancipation would deteriorate the character of the members of the Roman Catholic Church, and superinduce on the habits of those who were educated in a communion which naturally taught subordination to authority, a disposition to despise all law and order.

In addition to the excitement produced by the prolonged agitation of great political questions, there were auxiliary causes, all tending to exalt the national mind. A great movement had been taking place on the subject of National Education. It was

held, and rightly held, that it was a brutish thing that the great mass of the people of this country should be ignorant of the wonders of creation; that a nation whose practical ingenuity, manufacturing skill, and commercial activity made it the greatest on the earth, should have a working population unacquainted with the nature of what they handled or converted into shape or form. So a murmuring cry began to be heard throughout the land, calling upon those who were sitting in darkness to turn their eyes toward the light. Then were institutions founded, and lectures delivered; scientific associations were formed in workshops; and men, mostly of the generation coming or just come to manhood, engineers and glass-makers, workers in brass and iron, handicraftmen of all sorts, with shopmen or others, were to be seen joyfully hastening to hear expositions of the laws of motion the properties of light, and heat, and air, the marvels of the steam-engine and the history of Watt, the nature of alkalies, and acids, and colours; and even the very housewife at home was to be taught that "the art of good and cheap cookery was intimately connected with the principles of chemical philosophy."

Conspicuous amongst the agitators on the subject of "Useful Knowledge" was Brougham, whose versatile genius had tried every subject, and who, by the force and intensity of a vigorous and restless intellect, had risen to the very summit

of popular favour. It was perfectly natural, and to be expected, that a man "so various" should be exposed to hostile criticism; and that, as he alighted on every profession and every topic, a lawyer should be able to detect flaws in his legal lore, and natural historians defects in his "useful knowledge." No wonder, therefore, that in his *avant courrier* of "The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," namely, the celebrated tract on the "Objects, Advantages, and Pleasures of Science," he should have fallen into error; and in his zeal for the accumulation of *facts*, recounted the marvellous stories of ants whose structures no traveller could approach without being devoured, and gravely recorded what is laughed at by all naturalists, those accounts of the sagacity of beavers, which, in the words of Brougham, represent them as having overseers amongst them, who "superintend the rest, and make signals by sharp strokes with the tail, which are carefully attended to."

Nearly every leading or conspicuous man in the Whig-Radical party was identified with the Useful Knowledge Society, of which Lord Brougham was chairman, and Lord John Russell vice-chairman. The scheme of the Society seemed noble, generous, magnificent. As the Bible Society had its bond of union in the circulation of the Scriptures without note or comment, so had the Useful Knowledge Society, in the diffusion of science without admixture of theological or poli-

tical opinion. As Christians of all sects were banded together to diffuse the Book of Revelation, so men of various character were invited to join in the design of opening and expounding the Book of Creation to the meanest of the people. Some called out to beware of enlightening the masses without at the same time amending their physical condition. Others looked jealously at an attempt to enlighten them at all, thinking it but a covert for insidious designs. Others again, though cordial friends of the diffusion of knowledge, were afraid of the disjunction of religious and intellectual instruction, and shook their heads, marvelling "whereunto this would grow." But the great body of the people rejoiced to hear the voice of the Society, and listened with greedy ears. It seemed as if the breaking up of the intellectual monopoly was a warning note of destruction to all other monopolies. Learning might still try to seclude itself in halls and colleges, but Science had taken staff in hand, had girded his loins, was about to travel over the whole country, to visit the factory and the mine, and to sit down by the poor man's fire-side. Henceforth the meanest drudge had opportunity of placing himself on an intellectual level with his more favoured brethren; many of the "difficulties" that impeded the "pursuit of knowledge" were taken out of the way; quoting from Chenevix, it was announced that "the bent of civilisation was to make good things cheap;" and a host of publi-

cations, many of them really admirable, were poured out, to instruct and elevate the public.

What, therefore, with political, social, and literary agitation, the NATIONAL MIND, in 1832, was in a state of high exaltation. There floated before the public vision dreams of social regeneration, somewhat analogous to those visions of perfectibility which preceded and accompanied the opening of the first French Revolution. For everybody imagined that a new era was dawning; the entire moral and mental composition of the people of this country was in a state of ebullition. This was the time when newspapers exercised so despotic a power over the movements of the public mind;—and though it is unfair to compare the state of England at the era of the Reform Bill with the state of France at the era of the first revolution; and though that higher respect for moral decency and truth, which pervades the atmosphere of English feeling, exercises a far more powerful sway over English than over French newspapers, still the words of Burke, in 1791, applied to agitation in France, are not without applicability to the agitation in England in 1832:—

"The seeds are sown almost everywhere, chiefly by newspaper circulations, infinitely more efficacious and extensive than ever they were. And they are a more important instrument than generally is imagined. They are a part of the reading of all, they are the whole of the reading of the far

greater number. The writers of these papers indeed, for the greater part, are either unknown or in contempt; but they are like a battery, in which the stroke of any one ball produces no great effect, but the amount of continual repetition is decisive. Let us only suffer any person to tell us his story, morning and evening, but for one twelvemonth, and he will become our master."

The three Reform Bills, for England, Scotland, and Ireland, were passed in 1832; and at the close of the year Parliament was dissolved. The year 1833, therefore, opened the Reform Era. In the excitement of the elections under the new system, the Tory party, which had nearly lost all spirit, was reduced to a pitiful minority, the utmost number which they could possibly reckon on in the new House of Commons not being more than one hundred and fifty. The remainder, however, were not all exclusively ministerialists. On all great occasions they might be calculated on, in supporting ministers; but there were not a few "moderates," whom a short period was destined to turn into "Conservatives," while the ultra or Radical party, a curious collection of Irish, Scotch, and English members, mustered about one hundred, and who might be expected to act occasionally "independently," that is, in opposition to both Whigs and Tories.

The Tories, few in number, were also divided in council. A section were "ultra" in opinion,

and had not yet learned to forgive Sir Robert Peel; for they considered that his conduct in the matter of Catholic Emancipation had paved the way for the Reform Bill, and had prostrated the strength of the party. Another section was composed of the "moderate Tories," who recognised Sir Robert Peel; and these constituted the small nucleus of that Conservative party which it is his boast that he has created.

Amongst the great and important questions which occupied the attention of the Reformed Legislature during the busy year 1833 was the government plan for the reformation of the Irish Church. This exhibited disunion between the two sections of the Tory party. Sir Robert Harry Inglis (he who had ousted Sir Robert Peel from the representation of Oxford University), speaking the sentiments of the ultra section, declared his determination to give the measure his "heartfelt, earnest, and persevering resistance. It is hopeless, I believe," he added, "but I have been too long accustomed to vote in minorities, and to lift up my voice in this House without success, not to be prepared for such a result; but, with the indulgence of the House, I will, as long as God gives me life, health, and strength, oppose the measure now brought forward." Sir Robert Peel, on the contrary, admitted that the time was now come when the whole state of the Irish Church must undergo an enlarged and comprehensive consider-

ation; and although he did not much approve of some parts of the ministerial scheme, he was prepared to acquiesce in other parts of it, and to give the whole his best consideration. This was in accordance with the principle which he said would actuate him in the Reformed Parliament: that of supporting ministers wherever he thought them right, and opposing them wherever he thought them wrong.

The Irish Church Bill was the only question during 1833, which endangered the possession of office by the Reform Administration. It roused up, once more, all the hostile feeling of the Tory party, and seemed again about to place the House of Lords in collision with the Commons, and with the great bulk of the people. "The storm," to use the phrase employed at the time, "blew over;" the Duke of Wellington, Earl Harrowby, and others, persuaded the more ultra portion of the party that it would be highly inexpedient to revive again that agitation, from the rocking and reeling of which the country had not yet recovered. The bill, therefore, passed.

The other great questions were all of a momentous character, but not involving any material opposition on the point of principle. The revision of the charters of the Bank of England and of the East India Company; the abolition of colonial slavery; bills of coercion and reformation for Ireland; with discussions on Church establishments,

education, factories, reduction of taxation, abolition of pensions and sinecures, &c., &c., all occupied the House, and filled public attention, during this remarkable and busy year. The Repeal of the Union insisted on by O'Connell, resisted with great energy by Mr. (Lord) Stanley, and controverted in a remarkable speech by Mr. Spring Rice (Lord Monteagle); the entire abrogation of the Irish Church, and the expulsion of Sir Robert Peel from the Privy Council, pet projects of Cobbett; the novel spectacle of a Quaker (Mr. Pease) presenting himself at the bar of the House of Commons and requiring to be admitted a member on his affirmation instead of his oath; the investigations, the discussions, and the bills which followed, extending the privilege claimed to Quakers, Moravians, and Separatists; the proposition of a tax on property and income; the proposition of a fixed duty on the importation of corn, proposed by Earl Fitzwilliam and Mr. Whitmore; Mr. Grote's motion for the introduction of the vote by Ballot; Mr. Tennyson d'Eyncourt's motion for the repeal of the Septennial Act; Mr. Roebuck's, for an enlarged scheme of national education; and the division on Mr. Faithfull's motion for the abolition of the Established Church, and the appropriation of its revenues for the relief of the nation, in which division not an "Aye" was heard; these, in addition to the momentous ministerial questions, occupied the Legislature during 1833.

From the outset of their career, the Whig Ministry had been exposed to the vituperation of O'Connell, on account of the vigorous measures which they deemed it necessary to adopt for the pacification of Ireland. He told the people of that country, in one of his addresses, that "when the Whigs are out of office, they are the most liberal and enlightened of the friends of human freedom: the moment they get into office, that instant they become the readiest champions of despotic authority." At the opening of the session he denounced the address as "base, brutal, and bloody," and nothing but a declaration of war against Ireland; and he vigorously opposed the progress of the Irish coercion bill, in support of which the two best speeches in the House of Commons were made by Mr. (Lord) Stanley and Sir Robert Peel.

During the very heat of the Reform agitation and triumph of the Reform party, considerable discontent sprang up. The main body of the middle classes, those who supported the Ministry, were satisfied, because great questions were carrying, in which they were deeply interested. But the bulk of the working classes—those who had played so conspicuous a part in the huge gatherings and "physical force" demonstrations which had no little effect in carrying the Reform Bill—began to think that no results were coming to them from all the trouble and the turmoil. Their "Trades'

Unions" were discountenanced; a Commission had been issued to make a searching inquiry into the administration of the Poor Laws, from which they augured nothing favourable to themselves; and the Radical party in the House and out of it began to murmur that ministers would not go fast enough. The public mind had been used to such sweeping changes, that nothing short of magnificent movements in legislation would satisfy a large portion of the "Reform party;" and Earl Grey, feeling old age coming over him, having seen the two great objects of his life accomplished, and aided in giving the finishing stroke to that "Slavery and the Slave Trade" against which he had fought with Wilberforce and Fox, now wished to retire. Alluding to the "pressure from without," and the disturbance within, which had led to his retirement, he gracefully said that he had "descended, not fallen from power;" but in the House of Lords, on the 9th of July, 1834, he vindicated his administration:—"With respect," said he, "to the internal state of the country, we leave it in improved circumstances—trade in a sound and healthy condition—the manufacturers generally employed—public credit improved, and all interests in a better condition, with one single exception, agriculture; and even the depression of that interest less affecting the tenantry than the landlord, through the reduction of rents. Political and trades' unions have disappeared. We have

exerted the ordinary powers of the law for their suppression; and by administering it with a firm hand, the result has been complete success."

Lord Melbourne succeeded Earl Grey as prime minister; and the "Reform Ministry" still continued to exist, having since its original construction only undergone two or three alterations in individual offices, arising from personal causes. But at a great banquet given at Edinburgh to Earl Grey, the Lord Chancellor Brougham intimated that the future progress of the ministry was likelier to be slower than more rapid than it had hitherto been; whereupon the late Earl of Durham, who was regarded as the Radical leader of the people, rebuked the Chancellor for his trimming policy. This public exhibition excited much attention, and tended to diminish the *eclat* which had hitherto shone around the Reform Ministry. Other things all gradually lowered it in public estimation, especially amongst the working classes, who had, from an early period in the Reform agitation, imbibed the opinion that "Whigs" and "political economists" were cold-blooded animals, who would treat them as a martinet treats a marching brigade; a feeling greatly increased and aggravated by the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act—a change vaster in its social importance than any other reform affecting the internal condition of the country which had yet been enacted by Whig or Tory. Though this was no exclusively "Whig"

question, having been supported by all the leading men of both parties, including the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, yet as it was the product of the labours of a Whig-appointed Commission, and carried by a Whig Ministry, the full *discredit* of the measure was assigned to that party which had hitherto boasted of having almost a nation in its favour.

In the autumn of 1834 there came a lull over the public mind—a sort of dreamy repose after the exhausting excitement of several years. Meantime, the Conservative party had been gradually recovering from its stupor, and all its dissevered units were beginning to attract each other and cohere. No political movement was, however, immediately anticipated. Sir Robert Peel went abroad. In November, Earl Spencer died; and his son, Lord Althorp, succeeded to the title. This honest and able man had hitherto filled the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer; his elevation to the House of Lords necessarily caused a vacancy. The prime minister, Lord Melbourne, went down to Windsor to receive the King's commands; and William the Fourth, whose mind had been gradually alienating from the Whig Ministry (an alienation which the erratic conduct of Lord Brougham had not mitigated), intimated that he considered the administration at an end. Next morning three lines in the *Times* newspaper intimated the fact, which acted like a cold shower-bath on a drowsy frame.

The decaying enthusiasm of the middle classes was suddenly re-kindled, and glowed intensely. Another matter added fuel to the excitement. The *Times* newspaper, the greatest engine of its kind that ever existed—which had fought, for many years, with a powerful arm and a rough vigour, the cause of Reform and "Civil and Religious Liberty"—took one of those steps which end either in ruin or in triumph, according to the boldness and the skill with which the experiment is made. For some time it had manifested symptoms of a growing alienation; had quarrelled with Lord Chancellor Brougham, and had successfully held him up to ridicule; and had fiercely, but unavailingly resisted the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act. It now came out on the "opposite" side, to the astonishment of everybody who read it; a cry of "Traitor!—we are betrayed!" was heard; for a brief period, like a powerful vessel labouring in a heavy sea, the *Times* plunged amid approbation and disapprobation, its timbers apparently creaking and groaning under the change: shortly however it "righted," and now floats the most magnificent, as it had been the most daring "craft," that ever sailed on the ocean of public opinion.

As a political party-stroke the displacement of the Whig Ministry was a premature movement; and the absence of Sir Robert Peel from England was not calculated to diminish excitement. The Duke of Wellington advised the King to send for

Sir Robert Peel and make him prime minister, his Grace carrying on provisionally the affairs of government. A special messenger was despatched after Sir Robert, who was journeying in Italy, and was caught at Rome: meantime, a crackling shower of jokes was kept up by the opposition press, at the notion of hunting for a prime minister as if the *salvation* of a *saved* country depended on a particular man. Objection, too, was taken to the provisional possession of the great offices of state by the Duke of Wellington; and an alarm was sounded that the Reform Act was in danger, now that the Tories were returning to power.

Sir Robert Peel arrived in England; and the new administration was instantly formed, exhibiting him as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Duke of Wellington as Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Aberdeen as Colonial Secretary, Lord Lyndhurst as Chancellor, &c. Lord Stanley, who, as Chief Secretary for Ireland, and Secretary of State for the Colonies, had occupied so conspicuous a position in the Whig administration, had abandoned office and his colleagues on account of a difference of opinion, and had been imitated by Sir James Graham. Surrounded by half a dozen friends in the House of Commons, Lord Stanley's position was a sort of neutral one, though, on the whole, more active against than in favour of his old associates; and as Sir Robert Peel was naturally desirous of

strengthening his own administration, and weakening the ranks of his opponents, negotiations were opened with Lord Stanley on the subject of accepting office, but which ended in failure.

On the 30th of December, 1834, the "Reform Parliament" was dissolved; and Sir Robert Peel, in an address to the electors of Tamworth, gave a manifesto of his objects and intentions on entering office. He declared that he would govern in the spirit of the Reform Bill, "if the spirit of the Reform Bill implies merely a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper, combining with the firm maintenance of established rights the correction of proved abuses, and the redress of real grievances." This, however, did not satisfy the roused and excited country. The sudden dismissal of Lord Melbourne and his colleagues was resented as a personal affront; and in the general election which ensued, party spirit ran very high. The result showed that though the Conservatives had wonderfully improved their position, they had not yet gained a majority; and the opening of Parliament was eagerly anticipated.

Before it met, a signal of war was given, by the intimation through the newspapers, that the Whig and Radical party would oppose the re-election of Mr. Manners Sutton (now Lord Canterbury) to the Speakership, which was a perilous party experiment, because amongst the Whigs there were many personal friends of the candidate; neverthe-

less, the boldness of the step indicated confidence, and inspired it. Parliament assembled on the 19th of February, 1835; and in a House of Commons more crowded with members than had ever been known before to have voted on one occasion, the Whig candidate, Mr. Abercromby (now Lord Dunfermline), was elected by 316 to 306. This was the first victory, and its moral influence was undoubtedly to inspire the one party with courage, and to diminish the cheerfulness of hope on the part of the other.

And now commenced an arduous and a gallant struggle, in which Sir Robert Peel extorted praise from his opponents, and displayed an industry and resources which surpassed, with some slight exceptions, all the former efforts of his political life. He sustained another defeat; on the Address, in the House of Commons, when, after a debate of three nights, an amendment was carried by the small majority of 309 to 302. Rumours were now circulated that the prime minister intended to defy public opinion, by resorting to another dissolution of Parliament; but Sir Robert Peel, in reply to Lord John Russell, indignantly disclaimed the intention. He, however, declared that he did not think that the majority against him on the address was sufficient to warrant him in retiring, before he had submitted his measures.

The Whigs and Radicals, whose union had been cemented by a "compact" at a private meeting

held at Lichfield House, now determined to take every opportunity of driving Sir Robert Peel from office. Meantime, amongst other measures, he brought forward a plan for the relief of Dissenters in relation to the celebration of marriage, which met with general approbation; and a plan was also introduced for the adjustment of tithe in Ireland. But Ireland proved, for the time, Sir Robert Peel's "great difficulty." In the month of March Lord John Russell brought forward the celebrated "Appropriation" resolution, with which he drove Sir Robert Peel from office, but which, with a sort of retributory power, afterwards contributed to the downfall of the Whigs. Lord John Russell's motion was "That the House do resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider the temporalities of the Church of Ireland;" and the debate of four nights, which ensued, turned on the expediency and propriety of appropriating the surplus revenues of the Church of Ireland to other than strictly ecclesiastical purposes. This was carried by a majority of 33: there being for the expediency of so "appropriating" the surplus revenues of the Irish Church, 322; and for retaining and applying these revenues to strictly ecclesiastical purposes, 289.

This was the first step in the process of removal. Immediately afterwards Lord John proposed, that any surplus of the revenues of the Church of Ireland not required for the spiritual care of its mem-

bers, be applied to the general education of all classes of the people, without religious distinction: which was carried by 262 to 237. And the third step was a motion, "That it is the opinion of this House, that no measure upon the subject of tithes in Ireland can lead to a satisfactory and final adjustment which does not embody the principle contained in the foregoing resolution:" this was carried by 285 against 258. These three successive defeats settled the question of the existence of the administration; and next day, the 8th of April, the Duke of Wellington in the Lords, and Sir Robert Peel in the Commons, announced the resignation of ministers. Thus ended the three months' struggle of the Peel Ministry.

The Reform Ministry returned to office somewhat altered in its *personnel*. Earl Grey had, as has been stated, withdrawn; Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham had abandoned their old associates, as had also various of the more moderate Whigs or moderate Tories, who had joined or supported it in the outset of its career. In addition, Lord Brougham was passed over by his colleagues on their restoration to office, by which they added an additional antagonist to the ranks of their opponents. Those, however, who constituted the new administration were harnessed for more decided action; and being once restored to power by what appeared to be the decidedly expressed will of the people, were armed with additional confi-

dence. The close union which had taken place between the several sections of the Reformers, especially the vigorous support given to the opposition by Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Sheil, and the Irish members, induced Lord Alvanley, in the Lords, to ask the irregular and certainly improper question of Lord Melbourne, when he announced his re-appointment as First Lord of the Treasury, whether he had secured the support of Mr. O'Connell and his friends, and if so, on what terms. Lord Melbourne replied that he did not know whether or not he would receive Mr. O'Connell's support, and had taken no steps to secure it. In the House of Commons, Mr. O'Connell alluded to this, referring to Lord Alvanley as "a bloated buffoon;" which led to a harmless duel between Lord Alvanley and one of Mr. O'Connell's sons. The subsequent conduct of Mr. O'Connell during the remainder of the session of this year rendered him extremely popular; and in a "progress" which he made in the autumn through the manufacturing districts of England and Scotland, he was met by multitudes in procession, and public banquets were given in honour of his presence.

Sir Robert Peel, through the medium of the Royal Speech at the opening of the session, had enumerated various measures of reform which his government had considered, and were intending to bring forward. He proposed to adjust the question of tithes, both in Ireland and in England; to

bring forward measures for the improvement of civil jurisprudence, and the administration of justice in ecclesiastical causes; to make provision for the more effectual maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline; and to relieve Dissenters from the necessity of celebrating the ceremony of marriage according to the rites of the Established Church. It was also intimated that a Commission had been appointed for considering the state of the several dioceses in England and Wales, with reference to the amount of their revenues, and to the more equal distribution of episcopal duties; the especial object in view being to extend more widely the means of religious worship, and confirming the hold of the doctrines of the Established Church upon the veneration and affections of the people. During the session, also, Sir Robert Peel intimated, that if the government of which he had been the head had been permitted to remain in power, they would have effected something of a practical nature for the relief of Dissenters in the matter of Church Rates. All this array of proposed reforms, to proceed from a Tory Ministry, was a practical challenge to the Reform administration, and necessarily acted as a stimulant on its revivification and restoration to power. Lord John Russell, therefore, took an early opportunity of intimating that in the next session ministers intended to introduce various measures respecting Church Rates, civil registration of births, mar-

riages, and deaths, and dissenters' marriages; while during the currency of the existing session, already far spent on their restoration to office, they brought in a bill "for the better regulation of ecclesiastical revenues, and the promotion of religious and moral education in Ireland;" and the Municipal Corporations' Reform Bills, for England and Ireland. The English Municipal Corporations' Bill revived, for a time, the hostile spirit between the Houses of Lords and Commons, and threatened another crisis. The Lords persisted in amendments; the Commons rejected them; hints were thrown out that the "supplies" would be withheld; and so unpleasant was the aspect of affairs, that Sir Robert Peel, who had left town towards the close of the session, returned, as he stated, for the purpose of lending his assistance in reconciling the differences between the two Houses Mutual concessions were at last made; and the reform of Municipal Corporations, a measure essentially auxiliary to reform of Parliament, was at last carried.

During the next session, 1836, several important measures were passed, such as the Commutation of Tithe in England and Wales, the Marriage and Registration Acts, with the Bill for carrying into effect the recommendations of the Ecclesiastical Commission which had been appointed during Sir Robert Peel's short premiership, and which effected some important alterations in the distribution

of episcopal revenues and duties. There were some minor acts of importance passed; as the reduction of stamp duties on newspapers. But the ministry encountered a determined hostility on the matter of the reform of the Irish Municipal Corporations, the bitter and acrimonious discussion on which was prolonged from session to session, and was only finally disposed of at the close of 1840. The measure for the adjustment of Irish Tithes proved another fertile source of angry discussion; ending at last, in 1838, by ministers abandoning the "appropriation" principle on which they had ousted Sir Robert Peel from office; an abandonment which, of course, laid them open to imputations of bad faith from their supporters as well as their opponents. For, most undoubtedly, the inference was fair, that men who had turned out Sir Robert Peel by the resolute and repeated assertion of the principle involved in "appropriation," were bound, by all the requirements of public honour and public spirit, to resign. Not to have done so was one of those errors of the Whig party which destroyed their *prestige*, and precipitated their fall.

The year 1837 was marked by several important improvements of the civil law, and mitigations of the criminal law; Lord John Russell thus carrying on the great work of which the example had been set by Sir Robert Peel while in the Home Office. In the middle of the year William IV. died; and

VICTORIA ascended the throne. This event appeared for a time materially to strengthen the Whig party in the possession of power. It gave them, what it was notorious they did not possess with the deceased monarch, favour and influence at Court: they had been replaced in office against the royal wish, by the will of the House of Commons; they were now retained in office by the royal favour; and could boast for a time that they had on their side Crown and people.

Yet in that very year, 1837, commenced the "decline and fall" of the Whig party. During the period of the agitation in favour of the Reform Bill the whole country was in a state of suffering, arising from a derangement of commerce and a deficiency in employment. But just as the Reform Bill was passed, we entered on a series of four abundant harvests, which disengaged capital, animated speculation, lowered the prices of food, multiplied facilities of employment; and out of this state of things there came a superabundant revenue, with the surplus of which the Whig party had accustomed the public mind to an annual reduction of taxation.

But now came a check. English money was sunk in United States loans, and paper money and over-trading almost ruined the trade and commerce of the republic, producing, in its reaction, violent effects in this country. Along with this commenced a series of deficient harvests; and from

henceforth, till their expulsion from office, the Whig government had to run the gauntlet of a declining revenue. The first intimation of this was given in 1837. In that year so small was the balance in the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer (only £608,585), that no reduction of taxation could be proposed; and next year, 1838, this small surplus was converted into a deficiency of no less than £1,429,000.

Misfortunes, they say, never come single. The change from a prosperous to a disastrous state of things, in the condition of the country, would, of itself, have been trying enough to the strength and reputation of the Whig party. But the suppression of the Canadian insurrection cost them an additional expenditure; the settlement of the Civil List, on the accession of the new Sovereign, exposed them to some imputations of being more desirous to conciliate Court favour than to consult the condition of the people; the amended Poor Law, which had hitherto been favoured with smiling weather for its working, now, in a time of distress, was found to press severely, adding more intensely to the hatred of "Whigs and Whiggery" which had for several years been growing amongst the lower classes of the population; "Chartism" and "Socialism" multiplied and spread; a Chartist insurrection had to be put down with force of arms; an Anti-Corn Law agitation sprang up, placing ministers between two fires; a section of

the Radical party revolted, and declared war; and while involved in domestic troubles and discontents, repressing insurrection in Canada, endeavouring to coerce the Jamaica Assembly, and taking a side in the civil war in Spain, there came on a necessity, real or supposed, for driving the Pacha of Egypt from Syria, flogging the Emperor of China, and overawing Persia and Russia from the mountains of Affghanistan.

In the year 1839, the Tory opposition, strengthened by continual accessions, and animated by the division in the ranks of the ministerialists, took up a formidable assailing position; and the public now saw, that if Sir Robert Peel and his party had not power enough to seize the government, they had at least vigour enough to harass their antagonists. This they displayed in a formidable manner in May, 1839. The House of Assembly of Jamaica had placed itself in obstinate collision with the home government, by refusing to assent to certain measures deemed requisite to secure the welfare of the negro population, and to carry out the Emancipation Act. Ministers, therefore, brought in a bill to suspend the constitution of Jamaica: on this the opposition tried their strength, and defeated ministers by a majority of *five*. Immediately they resigned. Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington were sent for; great public excitement prevailed; when suddenly the expectations of the one party were

dashed, and the despondency of the other relieved: Sir Robert Peel had differed with the Queen on the subject of the ladies of the household, and he had resigned his authority to form an administration. The more eager of his party blamed Sir Robert, and accused him of a deficiency in tact and discretion; others vented their rage on certain of the Whig party, whose intrigues, they affirmed, had been the secret cause of the failure. The administration was restored to office, and sought to conciliate popular favour by making that great change in the Post Office, by which the high differential rates were changed into the existing uniform and low duty; a change which was unquestionably highly popular with the commercial and trading classes, and whose influence and effects are not to be slightly estimated.

But with 1840 the Tory party commenced a more vigorous and powerful opposition than had ever yet been encountered since a "Reform Ministry" had entered office. Very early in the session the war was commenced by a motion of Sir John Yarde Buller's, "That Her Majesty's Government, as at present constituted, does not possess the confidence of this house"—a motion which raised a debate of four nights, and in which the entire policy of the Government, domestic, colonial, and foreign, was vigorously assailed and defended. It terminated by a majority of 21 in favour of ministers. On this occasion Sir

Robert Peel adverted to the various changes which had taken place in the composition of the ministry, from the time of its first entrance into office at the close of 1830. "How happens it," he asked, "that every man who has attempted to assert the authority of the law, who has ranged himself on the side of, and has declared his adherence to, the ancient institutions of the country, and who at the period of the Reform Bill were the friends of improvement according to your conception of improvement — how happens it that every man, or with few exceptions, every man, with one splendid exception, certainly, the noble lord opposite (Lord John Russell)—but how happens it that every man conspicuous for his talents, having any great claim on the country, on their confidence in his experience of public affairs, or from his station in the land, has, step by step, been driven from the Government? Since the beginning of 1834 these members of the Government have left it—Lord Grey, Lord Stanley, Sir James Graham, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Ripon, Lord Brougham (*laughter*), Mr. Charles Grant, Mr. Spring Rice (*laughter*), and Lord Howick the last. Step by step these men, for some reason or other, have been gradually expelled (*cheers*). They have been expelled because it was necessary to make a sacrifice of them in order to conciliate other parties. The last instance is that of the noble lord the member for

Northumberland (Lord Howick). He has left you because he distrusted the principles on which you now act, and feared the inevitable consequences of your power, and yet that noble lord has read us a lecture for withholding our confidence from you. On what ground did you (said the right honourable baronet, turning round and addressing himself to Lord Howick)—on what ground did you relinquish your connection with them? When we are called upon by you to give to-night a vote of confidence in them, on what account, I ask, did you sever your connection from them?"

Referring to Earl Grey's statement as to the condition of the country when he retired, Sir Robert, addressing himself to ministers, said, "You have had an unlimited control, with the exception of about four months, over the affairs of this country since, and I call upon you now to render an account of your stewardship, and to tell me whose fault it is that this country presents now such a contrast to that which it bore in 1834. You say that since then you have effected many great public measures, that Reform has been progressive, that no obstruction has been sufficient to control the steady march of your progress and improvement. How comes it, then, that in 1840 trade should be in an unsound and unhealthy condition—that public credit, instead of being improved, shall have become decayed—that for four months your public securities

have been at a discount? Agriculture, indeed, has improved, and perhaps you take credit for the improvement, and consider that it is to your manly and consistent course that that branch of the public interest is indebted for its condition (*cheers and laughter*). But how happens it, if Lord Grey had succeeded in extinguishing political and trades' unions, and by a firm administration of the law had suppressed the spirit of disorder—if his efforts had been attended with complete success—and if you have succeeded in a course of useful reform to an extent which no former government ever went or could have anticipated—answer me this question—To what is it owing that this country is now convulsed with political disorder, and that a spirit of insubordination is spreading far and wide, and that rebellion and insurrection are rearing their heads (*cheers*)?"

After criticising not only the conflicting opinions of ministerial supporters, but of individual members of the cabinet, he said, "I come now to your acts. I look to the state of the revenue. Do not be deterred by a reference to facts, if one of our great sources of strength, if our greatest security from danger, be the possession of means to meet the exigences of the country. What is the condition of our revenue? I find that there has been a gradual excess of expenditure over income. On the quarter ending the 5th of January, 1839, there was an excess of expenditure above income of three hun-

dred and forty-five thousand pounds; in the April quarter of four hundred and three thousand pounds; in the July quarter of five hundred and eighteen thousand pounds; and in the October quarter of eight hundred and three thousand pounds. Since the period that you have administered public affairs, you have increased the public debt of the country (*cheers*). At this moment there is a deficiency on the year of one million five hundred thousand pounds; in the last three years there has been a deficiency of three million five hundred thousand pounds; and at such a period, whatever the consequences might be—and although you carried the measure with the consent of some of my honourable friends near me, I must look to you for the responsibility—with this declining revenue, for the mere sake of popularity, for the sake of increasing your strength on a particular occasion, you consented to the relinquishment of the Post-Office revenue (*cheers*). I have a right to speak on this point. Suppose I had taken the same course with respect to the malt-tax (*cheers*): I was in greater difficulties than you. There was a greater demand for the repeal of the malt-tax than for the repeal of the Post-Office tax. It was a demand less sudden and more growing. A great part of my supporters were of opinion that it ought to be repealed. The difficulties of my forming a government were great. When my noble friend near me, acting from conscientious scruples, declined to enter office, I sought

the aid of the Marquis of Chandos, who was then looked up to with great confidence by the agricultural body. He said that he would be willing to aid me, if I would make the repeal of the malt-tax an open question. I positively refused (*cheers*). The noble Marquis might probably have yielded. I told him that my government, when it was formed, must be united in opposition to the repeal of the malt-tax; and that I would be driven from power rather than consent to inflict any injury on public credit" (*loud cheers*).

Other debates were raised during this session, particularly one on a motion by Sir James Graham, censuring the war in China; and on which, after a debate of three days, ministers were only shielded by a majority of 10—there being 271 to 261. On this occasion Sir Robert Peel addressed the House, concluding his speech in the following terms: "Let them remember the peculiar character of the people in this warfare, which had lasted for many centuries; and might God grant that the first indication of the vindication of the honour of England —that the first reparation for any outrage that might have been given, might lead to the early re-establishment of amicable relations with as little disturbance of friendly feeling as possible. In the absence of every confidence in her Majesty's Government, he would pray to that Power which governs all counsels, so to dispose the minds and inclinations of all men, that by just, but not dis-

honourable means, an amicable adjustment of these unhappy affairs might be insured. He would pray to God to avert from the unhappy people over whom war impended the dreadful calamities which threatened, and turn away from us the evils which the neglect and incapacity of our rulers so righteously deserved." The right honourable baronet concluded amidst loud cheers, which lasted for several minutes.

The session of 1841 was the last of the Whig ministry in office. Their difficulties, foreign and domestic, had continued to increase; Lord Stanley embarrassed them by leading a powerful opposition on the subject of Irish Registration; the country continued distressed; the revenue continued to exhibit a deficiency, growing instead of diminishing, in spite of expedients to revive it; and a hot agitation had arisen in the country on the subject of the Corn Laws and Commercial Reform. Ministers now made up their minds to alter the Corn Laws, and to introduce measures of commercial reformation and regulation; and Lord John Russell startled the House by announcing the ministerial plan of a fixed duty of eight shillings on the importation of foreign corn, with other fixed duties in proportion on other grain, which were to replace the fluctuating duties of the sliding scale. It was useless. The Duke of Wellington was too *late* in his resistance of Reform; Lord John Russell at once too *late* and too *early* in his concessions

on the Corn Laws and commercial freedom. Sir Robert Peel brought on a motion, "That Her Majesty's Ministers do not sufficiently possess the confidence of the House of Commons to enable them to carry through the House measures which they deem of essential importance to the public welfare; and that their continuance in office under such circumstances is at variance with the spirit of the constitution." This motion, after an exciting debate of five nights, was carried by a majority of *one*—312 to 311. A short interval now elapsed, during which Sir Edward Sugden, the present Lord Chancellor of Ireland, caused another disgraceful defeat to ministers, on the subject of postponing the operation of the Administration of Justice Bill; the object being to secure, that if ministers were defeated at the ensuing general election, the patronage involved in the bill might be handed over to their successors in office. Then Parliament was dissolved on the 22nd of June; the speech from the throne was delivered by the Queen in person, who intimated, that "On a full consideration of the present state of public affairs, I have come to the determination of proroguing Parliament with a view to its immediate dissolution. The paramount importance of the trade and industry of the country, and my anxiety that the exigencies of the public service be provided for in the manner least burdensome to the community, have induced me to resort to the measure which

the constitution has intrusted to me, of ascertaining the sense of my people upon matters which so deeply concern their welfare. I entertain the hope that the progress of public business may be facilitated, and that divisions injurious to the cause of steady policy and useful legislation may be removed, by the authority of a new Parliament, which I shall direct to be summoned without delay."

So to a general election the country went; the excitement, in 1841, not having been equalled since 1831-2, and some of the circumstances not being paralleled since the general election of 1784. The Conservative party were flushed with a conviction of triumph, yet in dread that the ministerial movement in favour of an alteration of the Corn Laws might counteract their efforts; and they were therefore roused to more determined and desperate exertion. The ministerial party had been cowed by a long harassing warfare, and many mortifying defeats; yet were they not without hope of a re-action in their favour. As the battle went on, the one party became amazed and delightfully surprised by the extent of their success, the other utterly dispirited by the completeness of their rout; and it was soon apparent to all that THE CONSERVATIVES WERE RESTORED TO POWER. In 1830 the Wellington-Peel administration was displaced by a junction of Tories, Whigs, and Radicals; in 1841 the Melbourne-Russell administration was ejected by the compact union of all classes

of Tories, aided by the junction of Whigs, and unopposed by many calling themselves Radicals or Reformers, who had become impatient of the old Ministry, and eager for the accession of a new one.

The cases of Pitt in 1784 and of Peel in 1841 are not precisely parallel, because the circumstances are in some important respects dissimilar; but in other respects, and in the results, there are many similarities. Pitt was in office, and supported by the King; but a powerful opposition in the House of Commons were determined to drive him from office. In office, Pitt used a Fabian policy, like Peel out of office: he exhausted the strength of his antagonists, and gradually reduced a majority of between fifty and sixty down to *one*. Peel's position was the reverse of this; but he gradually broke down the Whig majority of fifty or sixty, until he gained a majority of *one* on his "No confidence" motion. Pitt, having weakened his antagonists, resorted to a general election, in which they were so utterly defeated that about 160 lost their seats, and retired into private life with the consoling appellation of "Fox's Martyrs." Peel, having also weakened his opponents, was favoured by them with the experiment of a general election, in which they were prostrated, a number not unsimilar meeting with a fate which entitled them to the *punless* title of "Russell's Martyrs." Burke, who shared in the opposition to Pitt, thus speaks, nine years

afterwards, of that remarkable combination of circumstances by which the prime minister triumphed, and of its consequences:—

"One must take care, that a blind partiality to some persons, and as blind a hatred to others, may not enter into our minds under a colour of inflexible public principle. We hear, as a reason for clinging to Mr. Fox at present, that nine years ago Mr. Pitt got into power by mischievous intrigues with the Court, with the dissenters, and with other factious people out of Parliament, to the discredit and weakening of the power of House of Commons. . . . . Mr. Pitt was then accused by me, as well as others, of attempting to be minister without enjoying the confidence of the people. That House of Commons whose confidence he did not enjoy, unfortunately did not itself enjoy the confidence (though it well deserved it) either of the crown or of the public. For want of that confidence, the then House of Commons did not survive the contest. Since that period Mr. Pitt has enjoyed the confidence of the Crown, and of the Lords, *and of the House of Commons,* through two successive Parliaments; and I suspect that he has ever since, and that he does still, enjoy as large a portion, at least, of the confidence of the people without doors, as his great rival."

CHAPTER VII.

RESTORATION OF THE CONSERVATIVES TO POWER.

"The war, that for a space did fail,
Now trebly thundering swelled the gale,
And—STANLEY—was the cry!—
A light on Marmion's visage spread,
And fired his glazing eye:
With dying hand, above his head
He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted 'Victory!'——
'Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!'
Were the last words of Marmion."

SCOTT.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL had, after a severe struggle, been elected one of the representatives of the city of London. On the occasion of addressing his new constituents, he adverted to the results of the General Election, which had proved so disastrous to the ministerial party; admitted their utter defeat; but expressed a calm conviction that the principles of FREE TRADE, on which the battle had avowedly been fought and lost, would yet triumph over all discomfiture, and gradually take up a commanding position in the minds of Englishmen:—

"With dying hand, above his head
He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted 'Victory!'"

Sir Robert Peel, on the other hand, addressed his constituents at Tamworth, and his manifesto was eagerly consulted for a profession of the principles on which he would act when called to power. But with his characteristic prudence, he declined any explicit avowal of his opinions. "The Doctor," he said, with a somewhat grave humour, "had not yet been called in to prescribe for the patient," and could not therefore be expected to propound remedies. A rather unfair use of this expression was attempted to be made, as if it implied a personal reflection on the Queen; the object being, of course, to endeavour to create a personal aversion on her part, if it never existed before, or to strengthen such an aversion if it previously existed. But, indeed, for two or three years previous, the name of the Queen had been used in a very improper, if not unconstitutional manner, by both Tories and Whigs; reflecting men on both sides were grieved at it; but foolish, violent, or self-seeking partisans too frequently forgot what was due to both crown and people, either in making use of the Queen's name as a signal of influence and authority, or in selecting it as a topic for undutiful censure. The only object which can be served by reviving these recollections is to serve as a beacon for the future.

The new Parliament met on the 19th of August, 1841; and a rumour was current, that the Queen was coming down in person to speak a FREE

TRADE speech on behalf of her discomfited ministers. This naturally provoked the wrath of the triumphant party, who were anxious to prevent any discussion on topics which had so agitated the country, until at least the proximate ministers were installed in office. But the royal speech was spoken by commission; and however excited might be the state of parties, the scene, so resplendent when the Sovereign appears in person, was more than usually dull. "It has appeared to Her Majesty," said the speech, "that you may at this juncture properly direct your attention to the revision of duties affecting the productions of foreign countries. It will be for you to consider whether some of these duties are not so trifling in amount as to be unproductive to the revenue, while they are vexatious to commerce. You may further examine whether the principle of protection, upon which others of these duties are founded, be not carried to an extent injurious alike to the income of the state and the interests of the people. Her Majesty is desirous that you should consider the laws which regulate the trade in corn. It is for you to determine whether these laws do not aggravate the natural fluctuations of supply—whether they do not embarrass trade, derange the currency, and by their operation diminish the comfort and increase the privations of the great body of the community."

This bold avowal of Free Trade principles, in a

speech from the throne, was undoubtedly a resolute proceeding on the part of the ministers, conscious of being in a very decided minority in both Houses of Parliament. But the opposition, which had previously taken counsel in private, resolved on a cautious policy. The usual answer to the speech was moved by Earl Spencer, whose elevation to the peerage had led to the break-up of the Whig administration in 1834, and who has ever since devoted himself to those rural pursuits on which he ranks so high as a scientific authority. But the Earl of Ripon moved a series of resolutions as an amendment, which expressed a sense of the importance of the subject to which Her Majesty had directed the attention of the House, but begged humbly to submit that Her Majesty's Government ought to possess the confidence of the House and the country, which the present Government did not. This was carried by 168 to 96.

The main battle was in the House of Commons, where a similar cautious policy was adopted. Discretion had been strictly enjoined on all the opposition speakers; the plan was, to let the ministerialists wear themselves out. Accordingly two young men were put forward to move the amendment: Mr. Stuart Wortley, the eldest son of Lord Wharncliffe, who had successfully opposed Lord Morpeth in Yorkshire, and had thereby, as Lord Morpeth gracefully acknowledged, obtained the most signal triumph which, at the general

election, had been attached to the car of Conservative re-action. The seconder of the amendment was Lord Bruce, now, by the death of his father, Earl of Elgin, and at present Governor of Jamaica.

The debate stretched over four nights, and hung languidly. Free Trade was the chief topic of the ministerial speakers, and of some who professed indifference as to what ministry was in power, provided their ideas were realized. But the opposition speakers, avoided Free Trade, or slightly touched on it; all the leading men were dumb. At last, Friday night arrived, and with it the certainty of a division; and Sir Robert Peel appeared with memoranda in his hand, indicating an intention to speak. O'Connell, towards the close of the evening, spoke, but he spoke without his old energy, and without a particle of that racy collocation of words which can give vigour to vituperation. With his arms folded, he praised the Whigs and abused the Tories; contrasted the one with the other. He sat down, and up sprang Sir Robert Peel. He seemed animated by some unusual emotion; used a phraseology bolder than his wont; uttered his words with a desperate passion altogether uncharacteristic of his style of speaking. He repelled O'Connell's vituperation as proceeding from "an imagination fertile in calumny;" and looking directly across the House, and bending forward,

asked the Irish agitator, in a tone of almost savage scorn, if these were his "base, bloody, and brutal Whigs?" The passion evaporated, but the voice trembled with emotion for a long time afterwards, as he proceeded to state the principles which would actuate him, should he be called to power. At the close of his speech, the long-desired—the much-dreaded—division came on; and in a House where 629 members voted, there appeared a majority of ninety-one against ministers.

Sir Robert Peel was now installed in office; the late ministers retiring, with such cold consolation as Mr. Roebuck administered, that they should have to pursue "a long virtuous course in opposition." In the course of the short session, Sir Robert Peel resolutely refused to state his measures; he demanded time for their concoction; his powerful party supported him; and after passing a few necessary and expedient matters, Parliament was prorogued on the 7th of October.

The harvest proved deficient, thus adding another to the series of calamities with which the country had been afflicted since 1836. The distress of the people increased; a general gloom hung over trade and commerce; and fierce grew the agitation during the recess on the subjects of the repeal of the Corn Laws and Commercial Reform. In addition to the cry of "cheap bread," there arose another cry for cheap meat and cheap fish; the public learning with some astonishment

(for the fact had somehow escaped their attention) that no foreign cattle could invade the British dominions; that even foreign asses had to pay a duty of ten shillings a head; that while lobsters and turbot could be brought in free, foreign salmon and foreign soles were excluded; and that a thousand other strange inconsistencies pervaded our Custom-house regulations, and stinted the means of supply. These topics were therefore rung in the public ears; the "Morning Chronicle" and the "Quarterly Review" alike agreeing that it was hard to prevent an increasing population from such supplies of fish or meat as might be found available, let the supply come from whatever quarter it might.

The session of 1842 opened on the 3rd of February, the public eagerly expecting the revelation of Sir Robert Peel's carefully concealed intentions. The opening of the session was marked by an unusual *eclat;* the King of Prussia being in England, attended the ceremony, and the Queen was accompanied by a brilliant *cortége.* The speech adverted to the fact, that "for several years past the annual income of the country has been inadequate to bear the public charges," and recommended a consideration of the best means of averting the evil of a continued deficiency of this nature. "The state of the laws which affect the import of corn, and of other articles the produce of foreign countries," was also a prominent topic

of remark; measures were announced for the improvement of the ecclesiastical courts and of the bankruptcy laws; regret was expressed at the "continued distress in the manufacturing districts;" a complimentary allusion was made to the "exemplary patience and fortitude" with which the people had "borne their sufferings and privations;" and it was hoped that the deliberations of Parliament would be "directed by a comprehensive regard for the interests and welfare of all classes," and in their result tend "to improve the national resources, to encourage the industry, and promote the happiness of the people."

On the 9th of February Sir Robert Peel brought forward his long-expected and much-dreaded motion on the subject of the Corn Laws. The House was crowded; intense interest and the profoundest silence prevailed; the "country members"—those who, representing the "agricultural interest," had so materially aided in the expulsion of the Whigs—were fearful lest the Prime Minister were about to propose a measure so detrimental to their interests that they would be compelled to oppose it; and those who represented the commercial interests and the "Anti-Corn-Law League" were also impatient to learn the new plan. Sir Robert Peel spoke for about four hours; and almost immediately after the conclusion of his speech the House adjourned.

Referring to the distress of the country, he

said, "My belief is—while I admit that commercial distress—while I deplore the sufferings which have been produced, and sympathize with those who have been exposed to them—yet I feel bound to admit that I cannot attribute that distress in any degree to the operation of the Corn Laws, to which it has been supposed to be imputable. I do not view with those feelings of despair with which some are inclined to view them the commercial prospects of this country. I do not believe that the sources of our commercial and manufacturing prosperity are dried up; but I do say that a combination of causes acting concurrently and simultaneously is sufficient, in my opinion, to account in a great degree for that depression which has, unfortunately, prevailed in the manufacturing and commercial interests of this country; and I have that confidence in the native energy of this country—and I have had frequent opportunities of seeing periods of preceding depressions as great, and revivals of prosperity almost as sudden and extraordinary as those depressions—that I do entertain a confident hope and belief that we may still look forward, by the operation of natural causes, to the revival of our commercial prosperity. Sir, it is impossible, I think, to take a review of those causes which have affected the industry, and have, therefore, affected the commercial prosperity of the country, without perceiving that there have been in operation, during the last four or five

years, several causes, the separate effect of which would have been considerable, but the concurrent effect of which is sufficient, to account for the depression under which we have laboured. If you look to the stimulus which was given, partly, I think, by the facilities of credit, to the great undertakings in the years 1837 and 1838—to the connection which existed between the companies and the directors concerned in joint-stock banks, and our manufacturing establishments; if you look to the immense efforts which were made for the increase of our manufactures—for the building of houses for the reception of those who were to labour at those manufactures—the immigration of labourers from rural districts to those which are the seats of our manufactures—the immense increase of mechanical power which took place in the course of the years 1837 and 1838—you would hardly be surprised that those consequences should have followed those excitements which have frequently followed similar exertions at former periods."

Pointing out a similar state of things in the United States—adverting to the statistics of our Colonial trade—and touching on the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws, he said, "It is impossible not to feel that those who advocate a repeal of every imposition on every kind of subsistence of the people are enabled to appeal to topics which give them a great advantage; to urge that

there is a tax upon bread—a tax upon the subsistence of the people; to urge that the tax is imposed for the protection or advantage of a separate class. He who urges arguments of this kind must, of course, make a considerable impression upon those who listen to him. A comparison is made between the dearness of food in this country and its cheapness in some other countries, and the inference is immediately drawn that the people of this country ought to be placed on the same footing, in respect of the articles of subsistence, with those of other countries, and that their condition should be benefited by the reduction of the price of food to that at which it can be purchased in other countries. It appears to me that any conclusion founded upon such a position would be altogether erroneous. The question is, can you infer the comfort and ease of the people from the price which they pay for their food? Reference is made to the price of food in Germany, and to the facilities which the low price of subsistence gives for the establishment of manufactures; and the inference is hastily and unwisely drawn, that the people of this country must necessarily be placed upon a superior footing to that on which they now stand, if the price of food could undergo a corresponding reduction, and be equalized with that which exists in Germany. I apprehend that the true question is, not what is the price of food, but what is the command which the labouring

classes have over it. That includes the question whether the people require the necessaries only, or the luxuries of life?—because, in point of fact, from the prevalence of their consumption, many luxuries are in truth necessaries; and the real question will be, what is the command which the labouring classes of this country have over the enjoyments of life?"

On this topic he dwelt at some length, marshalling authorities and statistics in support of his positions; and then advanced to the subject of the amount of the average annual growth of wheat in this country with reference to the population. Against a "fixed duty," he argued that "it has been observed by writers of experience and eminence, that productive and unproductive years follow in certain cycles, and that you do not have a year of abundance necessarily follow a year of scarcity; but you must take a period of five or six years of abundance being followed by five or six years of deficiency or scarcity. The effect of a fixed duty on corn would be, that at all times, and under all circumstances, you must admit foreign corn into this country; and you should also recollect, that the periods of favourable harvests in the countries from whence you derive your chief supplies of foreign corn generally correspond with favourable harvests here. The great corn-producing countries of Europe are in the same parallel of latitude with this country, and are affected by

the same causes; so that it will be found, as a general result, that an abundant harvest here is contemporaneous with an abundant harvest abroad. When there was an abundant supply in the market, if a slight additional quantity of corn was brought in, it produced a very great effect. Mr. Tooke, in his valuable book 'On Prices,' shows that prices vary in a ratio very different from the variation in the supply of an article to the market, and that great alterations are incidental in price, from the nature of the supply of corn; and that a deficiency or a surplus in the supply of corn is generally attended, more than in that of most other articles, with an advance or fall in price very much beyond the degree of the deficiency or surplus. Mr. Tooke, also, in a subsequent part of his work, draws a comparison between deficient and productive harvests in this country and on the continent, and comes to the conclusion that, as a general case, within certain degrees of longitude and latitude extending over the central parts of Europe, there is, in the majority of seasons, a prevalence of weather of the same general character and propitiousness or unpropitiousness to the growth and gathering of the corn-crops, as prevails in this country; and that in general it may be taken as a rule, that a deficient harvest here is accompanied with a deficient harvest in those countries in Europe from whence we chiefly derive our supplies of corn; and that when there is an abundant har-

vest here, there is an abundant harvest in those places. If this is the case, and if our own country produced a sufficient supply of food in certain years for our consumption, it did not render it necessary that we should resort to foreign markets; for if, under these circumstances, a supply from abroad was brought in, it would be followed by an unnatural depression of the price of food, which would operate as a discouragement to the native producer, and which must ultimately lead to our dependence on foreign countries for the supply of food—an event which I should most strongly deprecate."

Passing onwards, he contended that "we cannot dispense with the system of averages while the present Tithe Commutation Act exists;" and then, pointing out the evils of the then existing "sliding scale," detailed his new and modified plan. "Now, for myself, I should say, that for the agricultural interest, as far as I can form a judgment —I should say, that if the price of wheat in this country could always be near a certain amount, its oscillations should be limited to some such price as between 54*s*. and 58*s*. I do not believe that it would be for the interests of agriculture that the price should be beyond that. Take the average of the last ten years, excluding from some portions of the average the extreme prices of the last three years, and you find that 56*s*. has been the average; and, so far as I can form an opinion of

what may be considered a fair remunerating price, I, for one, should not wish to see prices reach more than some such amount. I cannot say, on the other hand, that I should see any great advantage—considering the position of the agriculturists, considering the existing relations between landlord and tenant, considering the burdens on land, considering the habits of the country—I cannot say I should see any great advantage in diminishing the price of wheat below that average. But, as I said before, all calculations of this kind must be exceedingly vague; and when I speak of this average, I do not mention it as the pivot on which a remunerating price should turn, or as a price that the Legislature can guarantee, for I know very well that it is impossible for any legislative arrangements to guarantee any price of corn whatever—it is quite beyond our power."

On the subject of "Protection" he said, "The protection which I retain, I retain not for the special advantage of any particular class. I think protection cannot be vindicated on that principle. The only protection which can be vindicated is that which is consistent with general and comprehensive interests—with the welfare of all classes of the community. I should not be a friend to agriculture if I asked for it protection for the purpose of propping up rents, or with the view of defending the interests of a particular class. I disclaim altogether any such intention. It is my belief,

and the belief of my colleagues, that it is of the highest importance for this country—of the highest importance for the welfare of all classes—that you should take precautions to ensure that the main source of your supply of food should be derived from domestic agriculture. I believe that any additional price which you pay for that purpose is not to be, and cannot be, vindicated as a bonus or premium to agriculture. You are entitled to place such a duty on foreign corn as is equivalent to special burdens borne by agriculture; but any additional protection, I am willing to admit, can only be vindicated on the ground that it is for the interest of all classes of the community. I consider it to be for the interest of all classes that they should pay, occasionally, a small additional sum for domestic produce, to obtain security against the calamities which would ensue if they were altogether, or in great part, dependent upon foreigners. My belief is, that the alternations of seasons will continue to take place. Whatever law you may pass, you will have, occasionally, deficient harvests; and you must expect that harvests in other countries will often be deficient at the same time with your own. If you should find yourself, therefore, dependent on foreign countries for some such import as four or five millions of quarters, and if that calamity of a deficient harvest should be a general one, then you may depend on it that the interest of self-preservation will prevail

in those foreign countries over all others. Impediments will be placed on exportation, and their own domestic produce will be applied to the sustenance of their own people. I certainly could not be a party—not on account of the special interests of agriculture, but on account of the general and comprehensive interests of all classes—I say, I could not be a party to any law, the effect of which would be to make this country permanently dependent on foreign countries for a considerable portion of its food. That it must in a series of years be occasionally dependent on foreign countries, I cannot deny. There must be many years in which a considerable portion must come from foreign countries, but I do not abandon the hope that this country, on the average of years, may produce sufficient for its own consumption. Even if that hope should be disappointed—if you must receive from foreign countries, under ordinary circumstances, an addition to your own supply of food, I draw a material distinction between that supply, on the one hand, which is casual, which is limited in quantity, and which is brought in for the purpose of repairing an accidental and comparatively slight deficiency; and, on the other hand, that supply which is of a more permanent and extensive nature."

Hot debate attended the passing of the new Corn Law through the House of Commons. It was opposed by Lord John Russell as inadequate;

denounced by Mr. Villiers and Mr. Cobden as utterly insufficient; and attempts were made on the Government side of the House to raise the figures of the scale. All opposition proved utterly unavailing; the new bill became "the law of the land."

The next great measure was the New Tariff, accompanied by the Property and Income Tax.

On the 11th of March, in another long and able speech, Sir Robert Peel made his "Financial Statement." There was not the same degree of intense interest manifested as on the previous occasion of the Corn Laws; but still the House was thronged, and the keenest attention was paid to another of those elaborate exhibitions of "Facts and Figures," in the delivery of which Sir Robert Peel has no rival in the House of Commons.

He first entered on the financial condition of the country; exhibited that our annual expenditure was annually outrunning our annual income, and accumulating a growing deficiency; showed that the plan of the late ministry, brought forward in 1840, of raising £5 per cent. additional on the duties on excise and customs, had failed, the product being only one-half, or ten shillings, per cent.; and then travelled round the circle of *indirect* taxes, to show that he could not expect to raise an additional revenue from any of the great articles of consumption, so as to entertain any rational expectation of such an increase as would

meet the deficiency. "I never doubted," he said, "the social and moral benefits of the reduction of the Post-office duties. I did not say but that the scale of those duties might be too high, and might admit of advantageous reduction; yet I did deprecate, in the state of our finances, the reduction of the Post-office rates to one penny." Refusing to resort to additional taxation on the great articles of consumption, or to seeking a revenue from railroads—"from locomotion or from gas?"—he exclaimed, "Well, then, shall I look for a supply of our deficiency to all those miserable tributes to taxation which occupy the attention of provincial Chancellors of the Exchequer?—which occupy the attention of those who seem to have nothing to do but to suggest means of taxation to men in office, and with regard to whom, as I have discouraged the plans for additional foreign consulships, I have more than once, in reference to Downing-street, thought of writing on the portals of the Treasury, 'No connexion with next door.' Shall I resort to the plans of taxation invented by those who in small communities chose to turn their attention to finance, and who think that their inventive genius is on a level with that of Archimedes, when they discover a pianoforte, an umbrella, or some such article, not yet made the subject of taxation, and who immediately suggest the scheme to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, accompanied by a modest claim for a large per

centage of the amount received, in consideration of the novelty of the thought, and the certain success of its operations!"

Seeing no other mode of recruiting the national finances, Sir Robert Peel declared that he felt it his duty "to make an earnest appeal to the possessors of property, for the purpose of repairing this mighty evil. . . . . I propose that the incomes of the country should bear a charge of sevenpence in the pound, not amounting to quite three per cent., but which may be taken at two pounds eighteen shillings and fourpence to the hundred pounds, for the purpose of not only supplying the deficiency in the revenue, but enabling me with confidence and satisfaction to propose those great COMMERCIAL REFORMS which will have the effect of reviving commerce, and improving the manufactures of the country in a way that must soon react on every other interest, and which will ensure, even in a narrow pecuniary point of view, by the diminished price of the articles of consumption and the cost of living, compensation to every one subject to the pecuniary charge, while it will more than reward him for the burden imposed by relief from the contemplation of a mighty public evil. I hope the House will allow me to state in detail the particulars of the plan I mean to submit, and listen with patience until I have sketched out the whole scheme.

"In the year 1798, when the prospects of this

country were most gloomy, the minister had the courage to propose, and the people had the fortitude to adopt, an income tax to the amount of ten per cent. In 1803, after the rupture of the peace of Amiens, five per cent. was imposed on property: in 1805 it was raised to six and a quarter, and in 1806 to ten per cent., and so it continued until the end of the war. I propose that the duty imposed on incomes should not exceed three per cent., and should, in point of fact, amount to two pounds eighteen shillings and fourpence per cent. In 1814 incomes of sixty pounds were exempted from taxation, and those from sixty pounds to one hundred and fifty pounds were taxed at a reduced rate. I shall propose that from this income tax all incomes under one hundred and fifty pounds should be exempted. In the former income tax, in respect of that portion of the charge derived from the occupying tenants, the occupation of land in Great Britain was estimated at three-fourths of the rent. It was admitted, I believe, that that rate of profit was too high, and that the proportion of value of occupation as three-fourths of the rent was unreasonable. I propose, therefore, that the occupying tenant's occupation of land shall be estimated at one-half, instead of three-fourths of the rent. I believe that reduction to be perfectly just, and that the proportion I have fixed on was that contemplated in 1816, when Lord Bexley proposed a renewal of the income tax. I propose—

and I see no ground for any exemption—that all funded property, whether held by natives of this country or foreigners, shall be subjected to the charges I submit. Now that is the nature of the proposal with regard to which it is my intention, with the full and unanimous concurrence of my colleagues, to ask the sanction of Parliament as a wise and necessary one."

After producing the statistical data on which he founded his expectation of raising the sum of £3,771,000 as the product of the property and income tax—the duration of which he considered should be for five years, with the option of putting an end to it in three years—he turned to Ireland, where he could not find machinery, similar to that of England, for levying the tax. He therefore resorted to an increase of duty on Irish spirits, an equalisation of the stamp duties; and from these sources, with an additional duty levied on coal exported to foreign countries, with the product of the property and income tax, he expected to raise altogether an annual sum of £4,310,000.

This being more than equivalent to cover the deficiency in the revenue, as compared with the expenditure, he proposed that the surplus should be available in enabling him to effect a REVISION OF OUR COMMERCIAL CODE, by "making a considerable abatement of the duties levied upon some of the great articles of consumption." The general principle on which he proposed to pro-

ceed was, "first, the removal of prohibition in every case, and the relaxation of duties of a prohibitory character. Secondly, the reduction of duties, to a very considerable amount, on raw materials used in manufactures. In some cases we shall propose to retain a merely nominal duty, rather for the purpose of enabling the Government to obtain statistical information than as an object of revenue; and in no case, or scarcely any, do we propose to levy a duty of more than five per cent. upon raw articles used in manufactures. Upon articles partially manufactured we propose to make a considerable reduction of duty. We propose, speaking generally, that the duty upon articles partially manufactured should not exceed twelve per cent. With respect to the duty on manufactured articles, we propose, again speaking generally, that the maximum duty should not exceed twenty per cent. in any case. We have arranged the whole of the tariff under twenty different heads. For instance, under the first head we have included live animals and provisions of all kinds; under the second, are included all articles which can be classed under the name of spices; under the third, all articles that come under the denomination of seeds; under the fourth, wood for furniture; under the fifth, ores, minerals, metals, and all those articles which enter into manufactures..... Speaking generally, I may say, that out of 1,200 articles we purpose

to reduce the duty on 750, including all those which enter into manufactures. There are about 450 articles in respect of which, on comparing the present rate of duty with the cost of the article, it does not appear necessary for the interests of commerce, or for the interests of the consumer, to make any reduction; but upon 720 articles, as I before stated, we propose to make a reduction, and, in many cases, a considerable one."

Reasons of temporary expediency were stated by Sir Robert Peel why he could not, at that time, include SUGAR in his new tariff: but timber and coffee were so included; and in addition to all the other reductions, he proposed to reduce the taxes on stage coaches, so as to enable them more effectually to compete with railroads. And amongst the other topics of his speech, he referred to the subject of COMMERCIAL TREATIES, expressing a confident hope of being able to effect such mutually beneficial arrangements between Great Britain and foreign countries as might enable him hereafter to take other measures for improving and extending our commerce. He concluded in the following terms:—

"I have performed, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, my duty. I have proposed, with the full weight and authority of the Government, that which I believe to be conducive to the public welfare. I now devolve upon you the duty, which

properly belongs to you, of maturely considering and finally deciding on the adoption or rejection of the measures I propose. We live in an important era of human affairs. There may be a natural tendency to overrate the magnitude of the crisis in which we live, or those particular events with which we are ourselves conversant; but I think it is impossible to deny that the period in which our lot, and the lot of our fathers, has been cast—the period which has elapsed since the first outbreak of the first French revolution—has been one of the most memorable periods that the history of the world will afford (*hear*). The course which we have pursued during that period will attract for ages to come the contemplation, and, I trust, the admiration of posterity (*hear, hear*). That period may be divided into two parts of almost equal duration; a period of twenty-five years of continued conflict—the most momentous which ever engaged the energies of a nation—and twenty-five years, in which most of us have lived, of profound European peace, produced by the sacrifices made during the years of war. There will be a time when those countless millions that are sprung from our loins, occupying many parts of the globe, living under institutions unchanged from ours, speaking the same language in which we convey our thoughts and feelings—for such will be the ultimate results of our wide-spread colonization—the time will come when those countless millions

will view with pride and admiration the example of constancy and fortitude which our fathers set during the momentous period of war. They will view with admiration our previous achievements by land and sea, our determination to uphold the public credit, and all those qualities by the exhibition of which we were enabled ultimately, by the example we set to foreign nations, to ensure the deliverance of Europe. In the review of the period, the conduct of our fathers during the years of war will be brought into close contrast with the conduct of those of us who have lived only during the years of peace. I am now addressing you after the duration of peace for twenty-five years. I am now exhibiting to you the financial difficulties and embarrassments in which you are placed; and my confident hope and belief is, that, following the example of those who preceded you, you will look these difficulties in the face, and not refuse to make similar sacrifices to those which your fathers made for the purpose of upholding the public credit. You will bear in mind that this is no casual and occasional difficulty. You will bear in mind that there are indications amongst all the upper classes of society of increased comfort and enjoyment—of increased prosperity and wealth—and that concurrently with these indications there exists a mighty evil which has been growing up for the last seven years, and which you now are called upon to meet. If you have, as I believe you have,

the fortitude and constancy of which you have been set the example, you will not consent with folded arms to view the annual growth of this mighty evil. You will not reconcile it to your consciences to hope for relief from diminished taxation. You will not adopt the miserable expedient of adding, during peace, and in the midst of these indications of wealth and of increasing prosperity, to the burdens which posterity will be called upon to bear. You will not permit this evil to gain such gigantic growth as ultimately to place it far beyond your power to check or control. If you do permit this evil to continue, you must expect the severe but just judgment of a reflecting and retrospective posterity. Your conduct will be contrasted with the conduct of your fathers under difficulties infinitely less pressing than theirs. Your conduct will be contrasted with that of your fathers, who, with a mutiny at the Nore, a rebellion in Ireland, and disaster abroad, yet submitted, with buoyant vigour and universal applause (with the funds as low as 52) to a property tax of 10 per cent. I believe that you will not subject yourselves to an injurious or an unworthy contrast. It is my firm belief that you will feel the necessity of preserving inviolate the public credit—that you will not throw away the means of maintaining the public credit by reducing in the most legitimate manner the burden of the public debt. My confident hope and belief is, that now, when I devolve the respon-

sibility upon you, you will prove yourselves worthy of your mission—of your mission as the representatives of a mighty people; and that you will not tarnish the fame which it is your duty to cherish as the most glorious inheritance—that you will not impair the character for fortitude, for good faith, which, in proportion as the empire of opinion supersedes and predominates over the empire of physical force, constitutes for every people, but above all for the people of England—I speak of reputation and character—the main instrument by which a powerful people can repel hostile aggressions and maintain extended empire" (*loud and continued cheering*).

This financial statement and proposition made, unquestionably, a profound impression on the country. The late ministers and their adherents exclaimed that Sir Robert Peel was adopting *their* principles—carrying out *their* views—with the important omissions of corn and sugar; but the country, somehow or other, looked on with indifference as to claims of paternity. The "New Tariff" was the general theme; and great was the rejoicing amongst the commercial community.

The "Property and Income Tax" caused some little stir; and it was supposed, for a moment, that the country was about to rise against it, and by a successful agitation eject from office a minister who had declared that on the success of his measures depended his continuance in power. But the

country, like a drowsy slumberer disturbed, merely uttered a grunt of dissatisfaction, and then, turning on the other side, went to sleep once more. A vigorous opposition was threatened within the House of Commons, but it gradually died away: some members of the opposition expressed warm approbation of direct taxation when confined to property; but others declared that if a property tax were laid on, it should be accompanied with an *income* tax. An income as well as a property tax was the proposition of the minister; was supported by the majority; passed into law; and, in spite of the dissatisfaction which it has created, not likely to be taken off, until that minister and that majority shall be satisfied that its purpose is accomplished.

The Corn Law and the New Tariff excited warm debates during the session. The many interests involved naturally led to clashing; from both sides of the House warm appeals were made on behalf of particular trades or manufactures, which were threatened by the removal of *protection;* and the agricultural interest, ranking amongst the most determined and influential of the minister's supporters, resisted the terms on which it was proposed to admit foreign cattle into this country. The severest criticism cannot deny to Sir Robert Peel the praise of the greatest firmness and the most rigid impartiality throughout the conduct of a most important, a most complicated, and a most tedious

and harassing measure. Representations were listened to; modifications were adopted, where it was clearly shown that the injury would exceed the benefit: but throughout the dreary debate each night, and the active business each day, Sir Robert Peel resisted the solicitations, and remained unmoved by the threats, of supporters or opponents on every point on which his own judgment was clear. This is high praise, but he amply deserves it.

We need not enter further into the history of a Parliamentary session so recent as that of 1842. It was the most important, the severest, and the heaviest, of any session since the era of the Reform Bill. One measure auxiliary to the New Tariff was introduced by Mr. Gladstone, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, who, in introducing it, confessed that he had formerly opposed propositions of a similar kind. This was the "Bonded Corn Bill." But the late Lord Sydenham, when, as Mr. Poulett Thomson, he was at the head of the Board of Trade, in connexion with the late ministry, had also resisted a similar proposition. The session closed with a "fencing match" between Lord Palmerston and Sir Robert Peel; and scarcely had the doors of Parliament been shut, when there ensued the unhappy insurrection of the working classes in the manufacturing districts.

CHAPTER VIII.

Population and Production—Corn and Currency.

"I think I can trace all the calamities of this country to the single source of our not having had steadily before our eyes a general, comprehensive, well-connected, and well-proportioned view of the whole of our dominions, and a just sense of their true bearings and relations. After all its reductions, the British empire is still vast and various; after all the reductions of the House of Commons (stripped as we are of our brightest ornaments, and of our most important privileges), enough are yet left to furnish us, if we please, with means of showing to the world that we deserve the superintendence of as large an empire as this kingdom ever held, and the continuance of as ample privileges as the House of Commons, in the plenitude of its power, has been habituated to assert. But if we make ourselves too little for the sphere of our duty; if, on the contrary, we do not stretch and expand our minds to the compass of their object; be well assured that everything about us will dwindle by degrees, until at length our concerns are shrunk to the dimensions of our minds. It is not a predilection to mean, sordid, home-bred cares that will avert the consequences of a false estimation of our interest, or prevent the shameful dilapidation into which a great empire must fall by mean reparation upon mighty ruins."—Burke.

Seventy-four years ago Burke published his first avowed political pamphlet, which is now noted as containing a passage predictive of the French Revolution twenty years before it took place. The particular occasion which led to the publication of this pamphlet was as follows.

The administration of Mr. George Grenville (father of the late Lord Grenville) was broken up in 1765, and replaced by that of the Marquis of Rockingham, in connexion with whom Burke entered public life. In 1768 Mr. Grenville, being anxious to serve a political purpose, by vindicating his own measures, and those of the Marquis of Bute, and to censure those of the Marquis of Rockingham, wrote, or caused to be written under his direction, a view of "The State of the Nation," at a time when certainly affairs had a melancholy aspect, in consequence of the troubles and discontents which preceded the American war of independence. The "State of the Nation" exhibited "an impoverished and heavily burthened public. A declining trade and decreasing specie. The power of the crown never so much extended over the great; but the great without influence over the lower sort. Parliament losing its reverence with the people. The voice of the multitude set up against the sense of the legislature; a people luxurious and licentious, impatient of rule, and despising all authority. Government relaxed in every sinew, and a corrupt selfish spirit pervading the whole. An opinion of many that the form of government is not worth contending for. No attachment in the bulk of the people towards the constitution. No reverence for the customs of our ancestors. No attachment but to private interest, nor any zeal but for selfish gratifications.

Trade and manufactures going to ruin. Great Britain in danger of becoming tributary to France, and the descent of the crown dependent on her pleasure. Ireland, in case of a war, to become a prey to France; and Great Britain, unable to recover Ireland, ceding it by treaty in order to purchase peace for herself. The colonies left exposed to the ravages of a domestic, or the conquest of a foreign, enemy."

"Gloomy enough, God knows!" exclaimed Mr. Burke. And he set to work to test the accuracy of the description, and tore it to pieces with a powerful hand. One assertion of the author of the "State of the Nation" was, that our manufacturers were emigrating to France, carrying their capital with them, being attracted there by the cheapness of labour and of living. "This assertion," said Mr. Burke, "is totally groundless, and I challenge the author to bring any proof of it. If living is cheaper in France, that is, to be had for less specie, wages are proportionably lower. No manufacturer, let the living be what it will, was ever known to fly for refuge to low wages. Money is the first thing which attracts him. Accordingly our wages attract artificers from all parts of the world. In the course of years a few manufacturers have been tempted abroad, not by cheap living, but by immense premiums, to set up as masters, and introduce the manufacture. This must happen in every country eminent for the

skill of its artificers, and has nothing to do with taxes and the price of provisions."

This passage is introduced, not for any particular value in the opinions expressed by Mr. Burke (for his mind grew more matured on economical subjects), but to show how early began that strife which has teased and perplexed us to the present hour. In the very infancy of our modern manufacturing system there were complaints that the high price of provisions and the excessive rates of labour were driving our manufacturing capital abroad; and when the national debt was under one hundred and forty millions in amount, the same fears of national bankruptcy, and the same sympathy for the probable fate of the national creditors, were expressed as are uttered even now, when the load on the back of the nation is eight hundred millions. At that period, namely in 1769, Burke rejoiced at the flourishing condition of the woollen manufacture of Yorkshire, "and that infinite variety of admirable manufactures that grow and extend every year among the spirited, inventive, and enterprising traders of Manchester." "A trade," he adds, "sometimes seems to perish when it only assumes a different form. Thus the coarse woollens were formerly exported in great quantities to Russia. The Russians now supply themselves with these goods. But the export thither of finer cloths has increased in proportion as the other has declined. Possibly some parts of the

kingdom may have felt something like a languor in business. Objects like trade and manufacture, which the very attempt to confine would certainly destroy, frequently change their place; and thereby, far from being lost, are often highly improved. Look at the vast addition to the mass of British trade which has been made by the improvement of Scotland—what is thought of the commerce of Glasgow, and of the manufactures of Paisley, and all the adjacent country?—or the iron-works of such magnitude even in their cradle, which are set up on the Carron, and which, at the same time, have drawn nothing from Sheffield, Birmingham, or Wolverhampton?"

Before we quit Burke's remarks on "The State of the Nation," we may remark, that at this early period, when the "Wealth of Nations" had but recently made its appearance, our great and truly philosophic statesman stated, with admirable precision and clearness, the true principles of commercial intercourse; and though not strictly relating to our subject, we may quote his prophecy of the French revolution:—"Indeed, under such extreme straitness and distraction labours the whole body of the French finances, so far does their charge outrun their supply in every particular, that no man, I believe, who has considered their affairs with any degree of attention or information, but *must hourly look for some* EXTRAORDINARY CONVULSION in that whole system; the effect of which

on France, *and even on all Europe,* it is difficult to conjecture."

Twenty years afterwards, that "extraordinary convulsion" did occur; meantime, the United States achieved their independence, and the steam-engine and the spinning-jenny were working a social revolution in this country. Coming down to the period of the "convulsion," we find a most extraordinary state of things in England. Still quoting from Burke, we find him exulting in the growing prosperity of the country. The "woollen manufactures" of Yorkshire "flourish." "The principal articles of female dress, for some time past, have been muslins and calicoes. These elegant fabrics of our own looms in the East, which serve for the remittance of our revenues, have been lately imitated at home, with improving success, by the ingenious and enterprising manufacturers of Manchester, Paisley, and Glasgow." "The exuberant display of wealth in our shops was the sight which most amazed a learned foreigner of distinction, who lately resided among us: his expression was, that '*They seemed to be bursting with opulence into the streets.*'"

Yet with all these symptoms of wealth and prosperity, the country was in a state of SEVERE DISTRESS. Fluctuating seasons, and scanty produce, caused extraordinary variations in prices, until provisions became scarce and dear. Landed property, said Burke, "is in its nature the firm base

of every government; and has been so considered by all the wisest writers of the old philosophy, from the time of the Stagyrite, who observes that the agricultural class of all others is the least inclined to sedition." Yet at this period the labouring portion of the "agricultural class" *were* "inclined to sedition," as well as the more easily excited and the more turbulent manufacturers. "As usual," says a high authority (Tooke), "there was, as on all such occasions, a disposition to account for the high price of provisions by the assignment of any but the simple, sufficient, and true cause, casual deficiency of supply from the visitation of two very unproductive crops. Monopoly, forestalling, and regrating were among the causes assigned;" and Lord Kenyon, from the seat of justice (at the assizes for Salop in 1795), denounced "a set of private individuals, as plundering at the expense of public happiness, in this county, in this most abundant county, by endeavouring to purchase the grain now growing upon the soil." Members of the Legislature were as little enlightened as Lord Kenyon. An agreement was entered into "by such members of both Houses as may choose to sign the same," "To reduce the consumption of wheat in the families subscribing such engagement, by at least one-third of the usual quantity consumed in ordinary times, and to recommend the same in their neighbourhoods." Propositions were also made to erect public gra-

naries, and to take other absurd and roundabout methods of relief; whilst the riots raised by the agricultural labourers, in consequence of the inadequacy of their wages as compared with the price of food, led to the introduction of the "allowance system"—that monstrous mischief of the old Poor Law—and led Mr. Whitbread to introduce a bill "to regulate the wages of labourers in husbandry," to which Fox gave a qualified support.

At this juncture Burke stepped forth, and in November, 1795, presented Mr. Pitt with his "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity," a small tract, but full of matter, and marked by the master's hand. For Burke is, in the philosophy of statesmanship, what Shakspere is in the philosophy of poetry. There are more striking aphorisms, more general and universal truths, to be picked out of his writings than from those of any other author. The idea that wages invariably rose and fell with the price of food was inculcated by people of high as well as low degree, and the idea has been so supported down to the present hour. "Nay," said Burke, "it is not so; it is not true that the rate of wages has not increased with the nominal price of provisions. I allow it has not fluctuated with that price, nor ought it; *and the squires of Norfolk had* DINED when they gave it as their opinion, that it might or ought to rise and fall with the market of provisions. The rate of wages in truth has no *direct* relation to that price.

Labour is a commodity, like every other, and rises or falls according to the demand."

While this controversy between the price of food and the rate of wages was going on, there arose out of it a deeper and more awful controversy than had ever yet been known. Dreams of social perfectibility floated before the sanguine expectants who had hailed the American and French revolutions. A people *may* become perfectly happy in their social condition,' was the maxim of those who fancied they could look down through the vista of remaining imperfection to the happy groves of universal equality and general liberty. No! replied the cool economist, the people themselves stand in the way, and will ever so stand. Thinkers had, from time to time, and in different ages, pointed out the evils of a redundant population: Malthus, in the present age, brought out the idea in bold and stern relief. Burke, in his remarks on "Scarcity," said, "The labouring people are only poor, because they are numerous. Numbers in their nature imply poverty. In a fair distribution among a vast multitude none can have much." This was the idea which Malthus hammered out. Population, he proceeded to show, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years; increase of population goes on in a geometrical ratio; and while the increase of population goes on in a geometrical ratio, the increase of subsistence can

only proceed in an arithmetical ratio; that is, while population, left unchecked, increases at the rate of 2, 4, 8, and 16, and from thence 32 and 64, no application of science and skill can extract a more rapid addition to the means of subsistence than at the sober pace of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and so on. Whenever, therefore, the geometrical increase of population outstripped the arithmetical increase of the means of subsistence, a halt must be commanded to LIFE till SUBSISTENCE came up with it. And if that "check" to population was not effected by "moral restraint"—that is, if an entire nation did not learn and practise an abstinence which no nation has ever yet learned and practised, other "checks" would arise in the inevitable course of human affairs. War, famine, disease vice, and all "the ills that flesh is heir to," would intervene to grind down a superabundant population to the means of subsistence.

This doctrine was awful—it was appalling. Religious people shook their heads, and said that there was a divine command "to increase and multiply." Commonplace people laughed, and said, "Wherever God sends mouths, he also sends meat." And the working-people, with a scowl, remarked what a brute he must be who would call upon the poor to exercise "moral restraint" *because* they were poor, and permit the rich to do as they liked *because* they were rich. No marvel, therefore, that it should have rained "fire and brimstone"

on the heads of Malthus and his disciples. They were termed selfish—hard-hearted—enemies of the poor—cold-blooded monsters—and every other epithet that an indignant antipathy could suggest. Nevertheless the doctrine has maintained its place: it is entertained by grave, good, and benevolent men; and though other grave, good, and benevolent men doubt if Malthus's principle contains "the *whole* truth, and nothing but the truth," there is no question but that it contains "*the* truth," or, at least, "*a* truth."

If, then, it be the natural tendency of population, when unchecked, to increase faster than the increase of the means of subsistence, how does this doctrine look down on FREE TRADE? The "STEAM ENGINE" and the "FACTORY" have a natural tendency to gather around them an increased and a rapidly increasing population. But can the Steam Engine and the Factory so aid in the development of the means of subsistence as to compensate for the unnatural development which they give to the naturally rapid rate of increase in the population? This is a vast and momentous question. It concerns the happiness, the integrity, the honour of this great empire. And it is a question which stands on no obsolete notions, on no antiquated errors, on no absurd prejudices, on no ridiculous principles. No man can sanely doubt that the steam-engine and the spinning-jenny have been the practical MIRACLES of our day. By

their aid our mighty battles have been fought, our enormous resources developed, the "multitudinous sea" spanned, and Time and Distance made the playthings of an hour. Yet who can doubt that the atmosphere of the hot factory, the gathering together of dense multitudes, the receipt of good wages, and the excitement of stimuli, have all a tendency rapidly to increase the population—to add intensity to the natural rate of increase of mankind? And, while the population in our manufacturing seats of industry, like water pouring into a reservoir, seems to increase more rapidly as it approaches the brim, the ceaseless steam-engine and the ever-whirling machine demand more and more "elbow-room," in order to enact their wonders. Lancashire, Lanarkshire, and Yorkshire could clothe the world, if they had but leave; a single factory, in its application of machinery, can rival "Puck," and

> "Put a girdle round about the earth
> In forty minutes;"——

and London, in the single matter of printed books, could, with its steam presses and its combination of capital and labour, undertake the enlightening of the whole human race. What, then, is to be done with these gigantic powers, working for us so much weal and woe?

The truth is, ART is "the high-trotting horse" which would bear away NATURE, tied, like Mazeppa, hand and foot on its back, and flying into

the desert, pursued by the gaunt wolves of famine. He is an idiot and a fool who rails against MACHINERY: he is an idiot and a fool that does not admit the *disturbing effect* of machinery on our social system, or who refuses to acknowledge that our powerful mechanical inventions are like a steam-engine in a frail wooden building, disjointing every beam and rafter. "Oh," exclaims Burke, "oh the folly of us poor creatures! who, in the midst of our distresses or our escapes, are ready to claw or caress one another upon matters that so seldom depend on our wisdom or our weakness, on our good or evil conduct towards one another! An untimely shower or an unseasonable drought, a frost too long continued or too suddenly broken up with rain and tempest, the blight of the spring or the smut of the harvest, will do more to cause the distress of the belly than all the contrivances of statesmen can do to relieve it. Let government protect and encourage industry, secure property, repress violence, and discountenance fraud—it is all that they have to do. In other respects, the less they meddle in these affairs the better: the rest is in the hands of our Master and theirs."

But there is our manufacturing system—there are our manufacturing population: the two together have shot up into an unnatural growth; are we to leave them straining and struggling, until, like lava from a volcano, the intense heat

causes an eruption which will flow over our social condition? Forbid it, wisdom! forbid it, common sense and common safety! The great problem of the relation of POPULATION to PRODUCTION may be said to be still unsolved, in spite of the approximating penetration of Malthus; but the influence of CORN and CURRENCY on our productive powers, and on the happiness of our population, has been tested in the history of the last half century, and the following are the results:—

Good and bad harvests come in CYCLES—a phrase made use of by Burke, in his "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity." These "cycles" sometimes come in alternate periods of one or two, and sometimes in four or five years.

When we have two or three abundant harvests in succession, CAPITAL is disengaged, INDUSTRY is stimulated, EMPLOYMENT is plentiful, and SPECULATION rears up its head.

An abundance of CORN is accompanied by an abundance of CURRENCY, in the shape of discounts, bills of exchange, abundance of bank-notes, &c. Honest, clever, energetic, but poor men, take the tide at the flood, venture on credit, and float on to fortune. Knaves and needy people, tempted by the spectacle, get up schemes, entrap the greedy and the foolish, traffic in companies and in shares, &c., &c. Merchants make large ventures; extensive orders are given; Manchester, Glasgow, and Sheffield are busy; more factories

are built; more hands are required; more children are born; and there is more spent by all classes of the community on food, clothing, books, and toys. Abundance of CORN causes prosperity; abundance of CURRENCY stimulates that prosperity; and the tremendous mechanical agents at our control pour into all the accessible markets of the world an enormous supply of every description of our manufactures.

OVER-TRADING ensues; and about the time that over-trading has reached its climax, the good cycle of harvests has revolved, and the bad cycle comes round. We are compelled to import corn; gold goes for it; the exchanges are against us; discounts are limited; credit is withdrawn; schemes are blown up; shares fall in value; employment becomes scarce; food becomes dear; there is less to spend on food, clothing, books, and toys; all trade and commerce become crippled and embarrassed; and a terrible state of distress ensues. A deficiency of CORN, and a contraction of CURRENCY, are the agents of this fearful havoc.

The remedy, to a given extent, appears simple in principle, if not in detail; and only requires an intelligent and courageous statesman, and an honest legislature, to apply it.

Our manufacturing industry, and our mechanical power, require no further *stimulus*—no further EXTENSION. Leeds, Manchester, and Glasgow are large enough for all our national purposes; our

manufacturing population numerous enough on every consideration of social safety. Therefore let the CURRENCY be TIED UP; so that, when we enter on our approaching cycle of good seasons (if the cycle has not commenced), there will be a LIMIT to the stimulus which abundant seasons gives to our tremendous manufacturing power. Better that a small number of poor honest men should occasionally be unable to find a SPRING-BOARD from which to vault into a fortune, than that the whole country should be exposed to the wild fury of periodical *commercial tornadoes.*

Haivng TIED up the CURRENCY, let the CORN TRADE be set as FREE as it can be, with reference to circumstances. For, in the language of the philosophic statesman whom we have so often quoted, "A statesman differs from a professor in an University: the latter has only the general view of society; the former, the statesman, has a number of circumstances to combine with those general ideas, and to take into his consideration. Circumstances are infinite, are infinitely combined; are variable and transient; he who does not take them into consideration is not erroneous, but stark mad, metaphysically mad. A statesman, never losing sight of principles, is to be guided by circumstances; and judging contrary to the exigencies of the moment, he may ruin his country for ever."

Looking then to "circumstances," yet never

losing sight of "principles," it may be worthy a statesman's consideration to what extent he can set the corn trade FREE, at the same time that he TIES UP the currency. On the principle that some protection is needed for our home agriculture, it must be admitted that no sufficient answer has been given to the argument, that, with a fixed duty, in cycles of abundant seasons, we should be swamped by supplies of corn from those European countries on the same parallels of latitude with ourselves, and which generally share with us in the same series of abundant and deficient harvests. But with a SLIDING SCALE for Europe, and a FIXED DUTY for America, there might be at once sufficient protection given to our agriculture, and sufficient encouragement given to our manufacturing industry; and with a currency secured from unnatural expansion and sudden check, we might see our abundant seasons pass away without any extraordinary OVER-TRADING, and witness the approach of deficient harvests, not, indeed, without regret, for that can never be, but at least without the terror of those days of woe, and nights of trembling, which must ever be endured when we have to "enter the cloud" of commercial panic and the decay of trade.

These observations may appear to indicate a deficiency of consideration or of appreciation of the difficulties of our social condition. These difficulties are indeed great. We have grown

up under an unnatural and artificial state of things. Our NATIONAL DEBT is a huge and unnatural excrescence, the growth of war, fictitious capital, and our enormous manufacturing power. Yet the removal of the tumour would cost the patient its life. Our vast manufacturing industry, great and wonderful as it is, has shot up into a tremendous artificial power, the creature of rare and accidental circumstances, such as having for a brief space the world for its operation, without any effective rivalry, as well as stimulating and being stimulated by that fictitious capital to which we owe so much of our National Debt. And our protected agricultural interest is another artificial but *not* unnatural excrescence, though it be the product of a short-sighted legislation. How are all these interests to be reconciled? How are we to be enabled to raise a revenue which will pay our annual state expenses, and defray the interest of the National Debt? How are we at once to *unfetter* and *restrain* our manufacturing industry?—to give it that legitimate scope which it *must* have, or else it will decay, and in its fall drag down the empire with it; and yet, at the same time, while we give it fair and free scope for all its legitimate exertion, deprive our superhuman powers of production of that additional stimulus from FICTITIOUS CAPITAL which has hitherto brought on us periodical disaster? And how are we to unthread our vicious legislation without injury to that agricultural in-

terest, which, in its present state of progressive improvement and productive power, is one of the most important in the world, viewed as the *basis* of the prosperity of an empire the greatest which the world has ever seen? Above all, how are we to provide for that great and accumulating labouring population, whose fixed idea is, that they *must* have "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work," and who entertain, with enthusiastic fervour, the vague, the vain, the absurd opinion, that if their demand of the "Charter" were conceded, and the influence of the working-classes was predominant in Parliament, they could cut the "Gordian knot" of our difficulties, and so manage matters as that every man might have a fowl in his pot, and a guinea in his pocket.

The most striking thing in the condition of this country during the last half-century has been, not so much our intermittent periods of prosperity and distress; but the startling fact, that generally, when manufactures were depressed, agriculture was thriving, and when manufactures were prosperous, agriculture was in distress. During the present century, the severest periods of manufacturing distress have been, first, the year 1812, when the "Luddite" riots prevailed, when men walked about the country destroying machinery, when "Special Commissions" were sent into the manufacturing districts, and when Brougham gained great honour by his successful exertions

against the "Orders in Council." Next, the years from 1817 to 1819, especially the latter year, when a general gloom hung over the country, in consequence of the stagnation of trade, the "scarcity of money," bankruptcies, &c. &c.—a period memorable as a "REIGN OF TERROR," when our distressed labouring manufacturers contemplated the overthrow of the Constitution, when even the Constitution itself was suspended by the "Six Acts," and all was alarm, distrust, misery. The next period was that comprised from the tremendous "panic" which closed the year 1825, up till 1831 (with some temporary alleviation), a period characterised by incendiary fires, political agitation, terrible excitement—the period which ushered in the Reform Bill. From 1832 till 1836 there was great manufacturing prosperity; but with 1837 commenced that long period of disaster which has endured till the present moment, increasing in intensity, and gradually extending to all interests.

The disastrous periods of our manufactures were the prosperous periods of our agriculture, and *vice versâ*. In 1811 and 1812, in consequence of deficient seasons and interrupted commercial intercourse, prices rose enormously high, and RENTS sprang up with them; but the abundant harvest of 1813 brought the manufacturing and commercial interest relief, while it depressed agriculture. In 1815 was enacted that astounding legislative blunder, the Corn Bill of that year; a measure

brought in to sustain rents which had sprung upward out of high prices and an inconvertible paper currency; a measure which utterly failed in its avowed object of keeping prices "at or about 80*s.*" per quarter of wheat, but which, while it lasted, inflicted fearful injury, first on the manufacturer, and next on the farmer. In 1822 the manufacturing and commercial interests were fast recovering from the disasters of 1817—1819, and were entering on that career of prosperity which was blown up at the end of 1825. But in the year 1822 the agricultural interest was in a state of terrible distress; farmers, struggling against low prices and cash payments, met and clamoured for the exclusion of foreign corn and the forcible reduction of the interest of the National Debt; and the wildest schemes were broached in Parliament for their relief. But why go on with this recital? Even in the prosperous manufacturing and commercial period of 1832—1836 the agricultural interest was in distress, and the present Duke of Buckingham, while Marquis of Chandos, signalised himself as "the farmer's friend" in the House of Commons; proposing, for instance, in the year 1835, the repeal of the malt tax, to which Sir Robert Peel, then at the head of his brief administration, felt himself bound to give his decided opposition.

The teachings of history cannot surely be in vain; deficient harvests are the root of our dis-

tresses, a vicious currency produces an unnatural prosperity from our abundance, and an unnatural adversity from our scarcity; vicious legislation aggravates our evils; and the aid which fictitious capital and the spirit of speculation give, during periods of prosperity, to the rapid multiplication of a naturally rapidly increasing population, aggravates, during periods of disaster, tenfold the misery which ensues. And add to all this, that other nations are commencing to run a race of rivalry with us in the production of manufactures, which must, even under the most favourable circumstances, diminish profits and affect wages.

We must come to FREE TRADE, but we cannot spring into it; the clown who tried to jump into his breeches broke his leg. Sir Robert Peel is following the career of the lamented WILLIAM HUSKISSON, a Minister of Commerce whose name ought to be held in honour by his country. Let him but be effectively seconded by the Legislature, and this country may yet retrace its steps into a sound policy and a prosperous condition. Increased production, the effect of the application of capital under the guidance of science and skill, will enable our agricultural interest to maintain its just place in the social condition of this country; while a cautious, an enlightened policy, may enable us to sustain our present great manufacturing industry, without giving it such an undue importance as to enable it, like Aaron's rod, to "swallow up

all the rest." We cannot *now* become "the workshop of the world;" our utmost efforts will only enable us to maintain our position. And in settling this question, it is worth while remembering that there is *some* truth in the words of Burke, who observes that "The cry of the people in cities and towns, though unfortunately (from a fear of their multitude and combination) the most regarded, ought, in fact, to be the least attended to upon this subject; for citizens are in a state of utter ignorance of the means by which they are to be fed, and they contribute little or nothing, except in an infinitely circuitous manner, to their own maintenance."

Having settled the "great controversy" of the day, there may be time to attend to the condition of our LABOURING POPULATION, whether agricultural or manufacturing, whose numbers and social condition—whose ignorance, half-knowledge, discontent, and political demands, are worthy of the gravest consideration of the most enlightened statesmen. Let it not be said of us, as was said of our forefathers sixty years ago, "The distemper of this age is a poverty of spirit and of genius; it is trifling, it is futile, worse than ignorant, superficially taught; with the politics and morals of girls at a boarding-school, rather than of men and statesmen: but it is not yet desperately wicked, or so scandalously venal as in former times." Rather let us boldly face ALL our difficulties; tell the

working classes that everything *will* be done that Parliament *can* do, to amend their social condition, and to give them the chance of "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work;" a demand which can only be realised by *carefully* unshackling trade, and mitigating *their* numbers, through judicious emigration, &c. &c. But as to the "Charter," our spirit and temper, let them understand, are expressed in the words of Fox, who in 1771 said, "Let us suppose that the people, instead of this mixed monarchy, which we celebrate as equally the pride and envy of the universe, should instruct us, their representatives, to introduce a democratical form of government; should we act as good subjects to our king, or as faithful guardians to our country, if we complied with so dangerous an instruction? We have sworn to maintain this constitution in its present form; to maintain the privileges of Parliament as a necessary part of that constitution, and neither to encroach upon the legal jurisdiction of the Peers, nor the just prerogatives of the Sovereign. Shall we, then, do what we are sensible is wrong, because the people desire it? Shall we sacrifice our reason, our honour, our conscience, for fear of incurring the popular resentment, and while we are appointed to watch the Hesperian fruit of liberty with a dragon's eye, be ourselves the only slaves of the whole community?"

CHAPTER IX.

A Night in the House of Commons.

"To be a good member of Parliament is, let me tell you, no easy task; especially at this time, when there is so strong a disposition to run into the perilous extremes of *servile* compliance, or *wild* popularity. To unite circumspection with vigour is absolutely necessary, but it is extremely difficult. We are now members for a rich commercial city; this city, however, is but a part of a rich commercial nation, the interests of which are various, multiform, and intricate. We are members for that great nation which, however, is itself but a part of a great empire, extended by our virtue and our fortune to the farthest limits of the east and of the west. All these wide-spread interests must be *considered;* must be *compared;* must be *reconciled,* if possible. We are members for a *free* country; and surely we all know that the machine of a free constitution is no *simple* thing, but as *intricate* and as *delicate* as it is valuable. We are members in a great and ancient monarchy; and we must preserve religiously the true legal rights of the sovereign, which forms the key-stone that binds together the noble and well-constructed arch of our empire and our constitution. A constitution made up of balanced powers must ever be a critical thing."—Burke *at Bristol.*

Come with me. I am going down to the "House." You have never been there, I believe; and if even a Cockney bound to Margate deems it essential that he should profoundly inspect the working of the steam-engine, you, a philosophic politician, cannot be without anxiety to see the working of the "British Constitution."

With all my heart. Pray, who is this tall, sharp-featured man, swaying on his horse, as if his seat was not very firm? The people, in passing, are touching their hats.

Don't you know?

Oh, to be sure I do, though I never saw him before. The Duke! He is now seventy-four years of age.

Yes, but his brother, the Marquis Wellesley, was eighty-two when he died. No doubt, Time is laying his hand heavily on the Duke; but you can still perceive, in those firm features, the triumphant warrior of the east and the west, the conqueror of Waterloo, and the settler of Catholic emancipation.

These Wellesleys have unquestionably been a remarkable family.

Not a doubt of it. The father, Lord Mornington, was a precocious musical genius, of a very high order; and the two brothers, Wellesley and Wellington, have each their separate field of fame, in which each must hereafter shine with surpassing lustre.

They say that the Duke was a rake and a comparative fool in his young days.

They say! He was not rich, certainly, and is therefore a soldier of fortune. But his ability was noticeable even in the Irish House of Commons; and even in such a gay, worthless, dissipated place as Dublin was before the Union, the young

staff officer inspired confidence in his creditors, and made even a tradesman generous.

How was that?

Why, it is stated that he lodged in the house of an opulent bootmaker, who accidentally discovered that his young inmate was in pecuniary difficulties. The tradesman voluntarily offered the officer a loan, which was accepted, and the Duke, in after years, did not forget the favour.

I should like to see him in the House.

Well, we can peep into the "Lords" before we go into the "Commons." There he is, you see, in his usual position; his legs stretched out, his arms folded, and his head drooping on his chest.

He looks almost as if he were asleep!

Not a bit of it. Again and again you may see him in that position, apparently "nodding," but "wide awake" to all that is going on.

Who is that man in the brown wig, a seat or two above the Duke?

Oh, that is the Earl of Ripon, the "Freddy Robinson" of former days—"Prosperity" Robinson, and "Goosey" Goderich.

These seem strange nicknames; of course, they are not unfamiliar to me: but what is the cause of them—is Ripon, after all, a noodle?

Not at all; he is a man of very considerable ability, and a very decent fellow, too. But, unluckily, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1825, he did not foresee the approach of the

terrible commercial crisis with which that year was closed; and when he was elevated to the peerage, as Lord Goderich, and placed at the head of the very brief administration which succeeded Canning's, he certainly displayed a lack of commanding vigour. He is now President of the Board of Trade.

And that big, rather pompous-looking man, beyond him?

Lord Fitzgerald and Vesey, the Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald whom O'Connell, the Catholic Association, and the forty-shilling freeholders, threw out for Clare in 1829, and thereby precipitated the settlement of Emancipation.

Now, though I never saw that man before, I can avouch him to be Brougham. That nose is an infallible finger-post!

Yes, that is Brougham, but it is Brougham of the Lords, not of the Commons. He is no longer the "thunderbolt of war;" "virtue" has gone out of him; force is nearly dead; and the startling orator, the coiner of felicitous phrases, and the sarcastic sneerer, the dread of foes, if not of friends, is now a twaddling and garrulous man.

Why, his speeches still read very well.

To be sure they do. I do not mean to say that the man has lost his intellectual capacity. But he has lost, with advancing age, his terrible *force*, and also nearly all that *prestige* which made him the most marked man of his time. I have, how-

ever, still some lingerings of regard for Brougham; and only get impatient with him when he talks too often and too long, as he frequently does; for, like Samson, he still seems to think that he can "arise and shake himself, as at other times."

Who is that stout and rather "square" man, in court costume, who occupies the woolsack?

Shaftesbury, the Chairman of Committees. It is a rich treat to hear and see that man get through a bill in Committee—he rattles over the accustomed phraseology with a cluttering rapidity quite astounding, and declares whether the "Contents" or the "Non-Contents" have it, before the parties themselves are aware that they have committed themselves to a decision. Were the Chairman of Committees in the House of Commons to rattle on in the Earl's style, or to put down *boring* speeches in his cavalier way, he would bring down the House about his ears. But Shaftesbury is a capital "man of business."

Who is this man talking to Shaftesbury—he in the buff waistcoat, trousers, shoes, and white stockings?

Redesdale, the son of Sir John Mitford, who was attorney-general under Pitt, and afterwards Lord Chancellor of Ireland. He was removed from his Chancellorship in 1806, when the Fox and Grenville coalition came into office; and he considered himself personally affronted by the manner in which it was done. I suppose the pre-

sent Lord Redesdale is "practising" for the post of Chairman of Committees, whenever a vacancy shall occur. But here comes the Lord Chancellor —John Singleton Copley, Baron Lyndhurst; the annual reviewer of the doings of the Whigs, when they were in office; he to whom Melbourne applied the quotation, that God had given his great talents, but the devil the application of them. And there, too, is Melbourne, that "elderly gentleman" with the white hat and cane, and a free, easy kind of *debonnaireté* about him. You recollect Sydney Smith's description of him—true. Melbourne is a very clever man, and the Duke said that the country was much indebted to him for the lessons in constitutional history which he gave in private to the Queen. But his easy, careless affectation of unaffectedness damaged his own reputation and that of the ministry over which he presided: the country could not be satisfied with the head of a government who appeared to treat all the responsibilities of office with a graceful, playful, and easy jocularity.

Who is that dark man with bushy whiskers?

Normanby; and near him you see the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Lord Henry Petty of other days. But come, there is not much doing here,—let us go into the Commons.

There, you see the SPEAKER before you. Manners Sutton, now Lord Canterbury, was an excellent chairman, and his voice was certainly imposing

and *ore rotundo*. But there was a pompous twaddle about him, too; and when called upon to lay down the law of order or of precedent, he scattered his sense in his sound; "honourable members" rested satisfied, because they did not clearly comprehend. Abercromby, now Lord Dunfermline, was far more intelligent, but he was deficient in manner. Now, Charles Shaw Lefevre is a mean between the two: he discharges his duties with a dignified and graceful bearing, combined with intelligence, and is altogether a very effective SPEAKER of the House of Commons.

What time does Peel come down to the House?

Generally about five o'clock; he is very punctual. He will be here immediately. Oh, there he is, with papers in his hand, I suppose the copy of some newly-concluded commercial treaty. You will see him stand at the bar to catch the Speaker's eye, when, of course, he has not long to wait; though, if other matters are in the way, he must take his turn. Hark!

"Sir Robert Peel!"

"Papers, Sir, by command of Her Majesty."

"Bring them up."

There, now, he is "bringing them up."

Does it not strike you, as he moves up the floor of the House, that there is a sort of *mauvaise honte* about him?—a thing that surprises me, considering his rather handsome person, address, and long usage of the House of Commons.

Yes, but though reputed such a peculiarly cool, cautious man, he is, in temperament, very sensitive; and keenly alive to all the proprieties of morals and of manners. You see he is a florid man—sanguineous; and such men are frequently very attentive to externals, while "black" or "bilious" men, though just as full of SELF, are more apt to neglect manner, in their deeper meditation of matter.

How old is Peel?

He approaches his fifty-fifth year, and, as you may perceive, is in the bloom of health, as well as the prime of life.

Do you know anything of his domestic life—of Lady Peel, who she is, and what she is?

Not a bit; and if I had heard anything I would not repeat it. Ladies' maids, chambermaids, and footmen are the very worst appreciators of character; so far from being able to see below the surface, they do not even see the surface; and a man so quiet in his domestic habits as Sir Robert Peel can only be known through a medium which it would foul a man to penetrate. As for Lady Peel, I only know what everybody knows—that she is the daughter of General Sir John Floyd; that he was married to her in 1820; that she is a quiet, unobtrusive lady; and said to be doatingly fond of her husband and her family.

As for Sir Robert's oratory, what do you think of that?

It depends on your estimate and definition of oratory. As a *speaker*, Sir Robert Peel has no rival in the House of Commons.

Why, what do *you* mean? I understand by an orator, a man who can talk well!

No doubt, no doubt! But Sir Robert Peel is not a Burke, nor a Fox, nor a Canning: his understanding, though not very capacious, is excellent; and though rather slow to appreciate and acknowledge principles, he is not capable of doggedly persevering in a course against which his intellect protests. His eloquence is therefore a reflection of his character. His mind is not deep-toned, his oratory is not electric, he clothes no principles in burning words, emits no "living thunders," imprints no ineffaceable recollections. Yet he is really an admirable and accomplished public speaker—as such, unrivalled in the present House. The habits of his mind enable him to arrange his topics with great art, and to present them with exceeding clearness; in the language of Milton, "his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their places." His voice, though neither sonorous, nor capable of varied expression, is managed with much skill, and so rendered subservient to the speaker's purposes as to make him, if not a powerful, at least a delightful and exceedingly interesting talker.

Sir Robert Peel knows that he is a capital

speaker, and like a good singer, has no objection to a display. His tact and prudence restrain him from being unnecessarily intrusive: yet, if he could, he would reserve all the ministerial talking to himself. He enjoys the sensation of having to make a speech of some four hours in length, on introducing some new measure, with the House crowded with listening members, the strangers' gallery crammed, and the public impatient; and very likely his enjoyment of such a sensation as this compensates, in some degree, for any mortification arising from his having to propose a measure which he may have formerly opposed. Next to this, he greatly enjoys having to reply to opponents who may have laid themselves open to fair retort, or even to a dexterous quibble, or an ingenious rhetorical perversion. "Let some blundering speaker make some awkward admission or obvious exaggeration—let some philosopher wander out of the ordinary track, and draw arguments for annual Parliaments from the annual revolution of the earth—then Sir Robert Peel treasures them all up, gives them a ludicrous turn, and with his face all wreathed with smiles, turns round to enjoy the bursting laughter and the ringing cheer which echo behind him. His enjoyment of this kind of thing has betrayed him into that habit of rhetorical evasion which has too much characterised his Parliamentary speeches, and procured for him the reputation of being the greatest master of plausi-

bilities in the House of Commons. He is shaking off this habit, and taking fairer and therefore higher ground.

Cool, cautious, and collected, he can nevertheless be put into a passion. He can also simulate emotion tolerably well, either of sympathy or of indignation; but his fictitious and real passion are very different things. His general habits are those of great courtesy; and though occasionally manifesting what Lord Castlereagh might have called "an ignorant impatience of being harassed," he submits with much patience to much badgering in the shape of questions asked, or deputations waiting upon him.

Such is Sir Robert Peel, now in the maturity of his powers, and enjoying more absolute authority as a prime minister than any of his predecessors in the same office since the days of Pitt. To whom shall we compare him? We cannot compare Sir Robert Walpole with Sir Robert Peel, for the men in their individualities present striking contrasts. Sir Robert Walpole cared little for his personal dignity, provided that he could secure his object: Sir Robert Peel would rather let his object go, than have his personal dignity compromised. Both deserve the reputation of adroitness, but Sir Robert Walpole was singularly adroit in private, whereas Sir Robert Peel chooses only to be adroit in public. Sir Robert Walpole could cozen, cajole, and laugh at and laugh with his supporters

while behind the scenes: Sir Robert Peel expects that his partisans will pay as much deference to him as he to them. Sir Robert Walpole was obtuse with reference to public opinion, but Sir Robert Peel is thin-skinned, and very sensitive as to his character and reputation.

Yet one may fancy some points of resemblance. "He was not," says Burke, in his masterly character of Walpole, "a genius of the first class, but he was an intelligent, a prudent, and a safe minister." Hume, describing Walpole while Walpole was in office, says, "Sir Robert Walpole, prime minister of England, is a man of ability, not of genius; good-natured, constant, but not magnanimous; moderate in the exercise of power, not equal in the engrossing of it.....The private character of the man is better than the public; his virtues more than his vices; his fortune greater than his fame. With many good qualities, he has incurred the public hatred; with good capacity, he has not escaped ridicule." But take rather Professor Smyth's summing up of the character of Walpole:—"His intelligence and prudence enabled him, without the assistance of the more divine influence of genius, to see and provide for the interests of a commercial nation; and he perceived that he could assist the prosperity of his country effectually, by clearing away, as much as possible, the duties and impositions by which he found our commerce encumbered and impover-

ished. He found our Book of Rates [Tariff] the worst, and left it the best in Europe—a most important eulogium. We have here merit, and of a most solid nature; a man in a high station going through minute details and tediously disgusting examinations, and exerting his patience, his industry, and his talents, in a sort of silent and obscure drudgery, where, though they were exerted highly to the benefit of the community, they could not be exerted with that *éclat* to which they most assuredly were entitled."

It is time for me now to put in a word. Will you point out Lord Stanley to me?

He is not in the House. See, there he is, coming in, swinging his hat betwixt finger and thumb.

Why, I thought that Stanley was a little man —quite a boy in personal appearance.

You surely don't expect men to remain for ever the same. Edward Geoffrey Stanley is now forty-four years of age; a time of life when, if ever a man is going to become *stout*, he manifests it; and see, Stanley exhibits symptoms of a *paunch*. Besides, he is of an average stature; has more *physique* than his friend Lord John Russell, whose personal appearance, as you know, and may observe, is meagre.

His friend Lord John! What genuine friendship can subsist between political rivals, where one of them, especially, is so bitter and caustic in

his application of *shin-plasters?* I am afraid it must be a hollow profession of words.

There you are mistaken. A very cordial sympathy still exists between Stanley and Russell; for Lord John is quite aware that nobody more regrets Stanley's impetuosity and petulance of temper than Stanley does himself—when the fit is over. On the occasion of the death of Lord John's first wife, and in the very heat of party warfare, Stanley wrote a letter to Lord John, full of kindly and affectionate sympathy; and on several occasions there has been a very cordial interchange of mutual regard.

What a pity, then, that Stanley, with so much real ability and genuine oratoric fire, should lower his standing as a statesman, by those occasional bursts of clever, energetic, indiscreet, passionate impetuosity, which render him as much the dread of friends as of foes!

Ah! he will cool, if he continue long in office. His natural temperament was excited and sharpened in opposition; and he was encouraged and flattered in his displays, because he is the very Picton of an assailing party in debate. In careless power, rapid yet easy flow of idea and of utterance, and in severe, almost savage retort, Stanley has no equal in the House: Brougham, in his best days, would have overtopped him, but there is no Brougham in the present House of Commons.

What position does Lord John Russell hold as a speaker?

As an orator—*nil.* He wants the physical conformation and the mental energy that are essential to oratory. But he is an admirable sententious thinker; and though in the mere power of speaking he is poor, his speeches are frequently full of point as well as of matter.

Then you think favourably of his abilities?

Not only of his abilities, but of his character; and to me it is a matter of real pleasure to see two such ancient and noble families as that of Derby and of Bedford furnishing representatives of so much personal worth and ability as Lord Stanley and Lord John Russell. And now that many great questions have been settled, I cannot reconcile myself to the idea, that because the Whigs are *out*, and the Tories are *in*, therefore such a man as Lord John Russell is to be for ever excluded from office, in a ministry where he could sit beside his friend Stanley, and his old colleague Graham.

Yes, yes, plausible enough: but *coalition* is an ugly word; and even though there may be now only *personal* recollections to cause any material difference, still we must not forget that in the public mind there is usually a "great gulf fixed" between Whig and Tory—not an impassable gulf, as Graham and Stanley testify, but wide enough in the estimation of party morality. But, talking of

Graham, show me Sir James Mackintosh's "manly puppy."

There he is, sitting beside Peel. Sir James Robert George Graham is of the same age as Lord John Russell, both having been born in '92; but you see the bright sword of Netherby is big enough and tall enough to put Lord John in his scabbard.

Graham has oscillated too violently between extremes for my taste.

No doubt of it; and Lord John, in his quiet way, very effectually "pitched it into him" not long ago, when he reminded him of his denunciations of "the birds of prey," the recipients of the public money, while he, Lord John, who had started in public life "a moderate reformer," was "a moderate reformer still." It is curious to see Graham on these occasions, or when he is pelted with quotations from his "Corn and Currency:" at times he blushes a *little;* an "innocent confusion" occasionally mantles on his cheek; but generally speaking, he laughs as hearty as the rest, and seems to think it capital fun.

Does not that manifest a deficiency in the nice sense of honour?

Well, well: let "sleeping dogs lie;" for "to err is human, to forgive divine." Graham abandoned his colleagues and his party, and did not treat them with scrupulous care after he left them. But they say that the old hare returns at last to

the old form; his father was a Tory. But let justice be done to Sir James Graham. He is a man of real ability; and now that he is in office, he retains and maintains some of his old opinions with manliness and consistency. By the way, there is the rising hope of the Conservatives, and Peel's right arm—William Ewart Gladstone, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, and Master of the Mint.

That young man!—what a disappointment! In person he is of a good stature, and, like Stanley, has a pretty, good-natured, rather pouting mouth, while the upper part of the face, like Stanley's, has a "knitted," if not a frowning aspect. But what disappoints me most is the smallness of the head. Under Stanley's careless locks, you can see hidden a good solid mass of forehead: but this noted young man—this philosophic worker-out of Church principles—I want for him capacious skull and breadth of face. Can such a small head carry all he knows?

We must take men as they are, and not as we imagine them. The head is small, but it is well shaped. You notice that the upper part of the face rather expresses severity; and I am told that old Gladstone, and the family generally, have been noted in Liverpool for what is called a "crusty" temperament. If this be so, and this young man inherits it, he is an example of the power of principle, for he seems to have his temper singularly

under control. His voice, too, is sweet and plaintive: he has amazing clearness of speech and volubility of utterance, but with a tendency to run into a mellifluous monotony, which he will probably correct.

Are his abilities as great as they say, or is he an example of being "cried up?"

Oh, no man can doubt that his abilities are great. I do not refer to his books on Church and State, with which he first established his reputation, but to his conduct in the House. He proved "a friend in need" to Peel in conducting the tedious business and details of the New Tariff: in fact every thing devolved on the Prime Minister and his Vice-President of the Board of Trade; and though Peel's great business facility and long practice in addressing the House enabled him to expound, state, and defend the principles and details of the Tariff with more fulness, force, and weight, it was universally acknowledged that young Gladstone shone in the department of "Facts and Figures," and displayed a capacity for official business of the very first order.

Old Gladstone has risen into great wealth from poverty, has he not?

Yes; the Gladstone family, like the Peel family, furnish evidence of the power of our trade and commerce to throw up individuals from the bottom of society, to disport themselves, like Leviathan, on the surface. Old Gladstone made his money

in Liverpool, as Morrison, the member for Inverness, made his huge fortune in London. I don't see Morrison in the House just now; you know whom I mean, James Morrison, of the house of Morrison, Dillon, and Co.—worth several "plums," which enabled them to run enormous risks in fruitlessly propping up the banking and monetary concerns of the United States. Morrison does not often speak, but when he does so, he is guilty of the weakness of a little foppery, such as an ostentatious display of white kid gloves, and so forth. But being a "millionaire," with good, shrewd sense to boot, he is always listened to with attention, when he does address the House.

Talking of foppery—is not Palmerston a fop?

Tut, one has no patience with these vulgar ideas of people, which vulgar fools propagate. Certainly "Fanny was younger once than she is now;" and time works changes. But look at Palmerston, sitting on those front benches; you see all the signs of a man of high breeding, but foppery there is none.

Is it not singular that Palmerston and Peel should now be pitted as rivals?

It is, rather; but, remember, though Palmerston and Peel commenced public life together, Palmerston was in advance of Peel on such questions as Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform. Palmerston is four years older than Peel, being now fifty-nine. But he seems in excellent keeping;

his vigour, mental and bodily, appears unimpaired —what a fine-looking man he is!

But is he really a man of talent?

The question is superfluous. His family—the Temple family—has a hereditary reputation for ability; and Palmerston does not belie it. To be sure, his opponents say, as Melbourne said of Lyndhurst, that his talents are from God, but the application of them is from the devil! And that reminds me of D'Israeli. Do you see that tall, rather thin young man (hardly young now), with Jewish cast of features, dark countenance, and heavy, full, swimming eyes, bent either in meditation or on vacancy—gazing downwards to discover the perforations in the floor? That's young Ben D'Israeli, the son of old D'Israeli, and as great a "Curiosity of Literature" as his father ever produced. Some time ago he took to the *foreign* line, wanted to overhaul all our Consular Establishments, and thought he would make a palpable hit, by finding Palmerston, like the devil, in every mischief brewing abroad. Ben is really clever—a genius: but somehow Sir Robert Peel and the party have not taken to him; though clever, he has a strong tendency to become a *bore*.

Where is Peter Borthwick?

There, right below; neat and tidy as if just turned out of a bandbox and a very pretty fellow. Peter is an example of one who,

"Born for the universe, narrow'd his mind,
And to party gave up what *he* meant for mankind;"

and also a beacon to future aspirants, that they should carefully avoid anything which may create the impression that an individual has far more need of his party than his party for him. The richest things in Peter's eloquence in the House are his occasional threats of pitching the party—not to speak of the Carlton Club—into the Thames; that is, when his friends around him are noisy and won't listen.

Who is that man with the spectacles, poking about like an old woman?

You mean Bowring, I suppose—Doctor Positive Utility. That man is a remarkable example of very considerable ability being wholly insufficient to prevent an individual from becoming a monstrous *bore*. He is, I am told, kindly and unassuming in private life; and his great philological powers, his travels, his statistics, his Benthamism, and advocacy of commercial freedom, are known to all. Yet as a speaker in the House, he is lackadaisical, lachrymose, and tedious; his pathos is invariably bathos, and when he does sink into the pathetic, his sing-song intonation makes it excessively ludicrous.

You speak of *bores*—are there many in the House?

A few: there is a youngish man down there—he with reddish whiskers and plain appearance,

who has got up to ask a question of his "right honourable friend at the head of the government." That youth exhibited decided symptoms of the *bore*, but somebody or something gave him a check. It is Stuart Wortley, the eldest son of Lord Wharncliffe, the President of the Council—the successful opponent of Lord Morpeth in Yorkshire at the last general election.

I see Hume in his seat—isn't he a *bore?*

Why, Joe is now permitted, in consideration of his long services, to have "the run of the kitchen." He offends nobody; and, on the whole, is rather a general favourite than otherwise. Unquestionably, whatever may be thought of his school of politics, he has "done the state some service" by his long-continued exertions in favour of Retrenchment; to which may be added what he has done for commercial reform, as for instance, by his celebrated Import Duties Committee, confessedly the immediate foundation of the New Tariff. But Hume will never get over that peculiar style of oratory which Canning characterised as "the tottle of the holl:" not long ago he censured the "peccadillies" of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and announced that wherever there was anything delicate there was sure to be something wrong.

Hume has an assistant, has he not, in Williams of Coventry?

Yes, a dull, unimaginative man, but very assi-

duous, very decent, and moderate, and therefore useful.

Is not that Sir George Grey? I heard him make a very telling speech in Exeter Hall.

And he can make a very effective speech in the House of Commons. He held but a subordinate position in the late government: had he persevered at the Law, he might have taken a high place. Beside him you see Charles Wood, the Whig Secretary of the Admiralty, and son-in-law of Earl Grey. He is a regular leather-lungs, and his face is as sharp as the edge of a hatchet; a man of ability, however: though you cannot endure to listen to one of his lengthy speeches from beginning to end, yet at intervals you can catch that he is uttering very good sense. Here comes his brother-in-law, Lord Howick: the malformation of his foot has probably affected his temper as well as his person; for though Lord Howick has an excellent understanding, and speaks with a level clearness and facility which would make him an admirable lecturer, he has a dogmatic and obstinate way of laying down the law which occasionally renders him disagreeable.

Who is this little man dancing in and out of the House, scarcely ever sitting a moment?

Sir Thomas Fremantle, one of the joint secretaries of the Treasury: his duties require him to be frequently on the move, especially if a division be expected, and the "whip" has to be

applied. He has met his colleague, Sir George Clerk, that stoutish, bald-headed, good-humoured looking man; and see, Lord Mahon has joined them on those back benches; perhaps to ask them to get a "pair" for him.

Lord Mahon! That's Earl Stanhope's son.

Yes, and as like his father in figure, attitude, and accent (each having a remarkable *burr*) as if, in the Irish phrase, he had been "*spit*" out of his mouth. Lord Mahon is a very decent man; one of our *literati;* and superior to his father, who is the *Ferrand* of the House of Lords.

Ferrand! Has not that man been traduced?

It has been his own fault. He had a very fine chance of making a reputation. His magnificent voice—his extraordinary volubility—the confidence reposed in him by the working classes—and all that, might have given him a capital chance. But his head was turned by the applause he received; and the want of judgment he exhibited, in adopting any vague rumour, and propagating any wild exaggeration, got him into so many scrapes involving honour and veracity, that the more prudent of the party found it necessary that he should be "cut." But Ferrand is very far from being a broken-down man: he has but to avoid his errors of injudiciousness, and he may yet make a respectable stand in the house.

But I have heard trustworthy people say that there was much truth in his accusations against

the manufacturers of making and vending worthless goods, thereby destroying our foreign markets.

Not a doubt of it. But his error was not so much in the matter as in the mode and manner of his accusations. We would all be indignant if our Folletts, our Pollocks, our Sugdens, and our Wildes, in the law, were accused of the practices which Warren has so vividly described in his delineation of the firm of Gammon, Snap, and Co. But the existence of the Folletts and the Pollocks does not disprove that of the Gammons and the Snaps.

I should like to see the two rivals, Ferrand and Cobden, together.

Cobden would not thank you for calling him a rival of Ferrand—he flies at higher game. Ferrand is now making his way out of the house—that young man, with a pugilistic air and attitude, and who looks as if he would instantly doff his jacket should you venture to insult him. Cobden I don't see—oh, yes, that pale-faced *Manchester*-looking man sitting beside Villiers.

What is, and what was Cobden?

Don't exactly know. I have been informed that he describes himself as having been born a Sussex *chawbacon*, and I suppose went, or was carried in infancy, to Lancashire. At all events he has risen by industrious energy: his print-works at Chorley are large, and the firm has paid as much as 20,000*l.* a-year in wages.

Cobden would have been nothing, I suppose, but for this Anti-Corn-Law agitation?

No man is anything without circumstances. But Cobden's talent has been developed by the agitation; and considering that he had deficiencies to overcome, and difficulties to encounter, it must be admitted that he has shot upwards into notoriety with extraordinary rapidity. Some say that he is but a man of *one idea*. It is a mistake: Cobden is really a man of great talent, energy, and tact; though, of course, it has been by means of his *one idea* at the critical time that he has become, in the compass of a year and a half, a noted public character.

Is he in earnest in his agitation against the Corn Laws?

Aye, aye; that is the secret of success. Right or wrong, a man must be in earnest.

Who is this fresh-coloured, fine-looking old man, a little feeble on his legs, who is walking out?

George Byng, the "Father of the House," who has been member for Middlesex for half a century; one of the relics of the days of Pitt and Fox. And, positively, there is Sir Francis Burdett—the relic of himself. He has still a fox-hunting garb and look about him; and as he walks, his legs still seem to fancy that their owner is on horseback. Sir Francis has been in Parliament now nearly as long as George Byng: he was a member in 1796.

See, Duncombe and Wakley, the Finsbury members, are together. Both notable men; neither fools nor idiots; each knows a hawk from a handsaw; and both are racy, piquant speakers. How Tommy Duncombe, with his aristocratic associations, came to be the representative of extreme democratic opinions, is best known to himself. He has not only the reputation of being, but he really is, "a very gentlemanly fellow;" and with that reputation, he is not only tolerated, but laughed *with*, in the utterance of severe things. His cool avowal of the "bribery and corruption" which he had practised at Pontefract and Hertford, and his challenge to all "who were without sin to cast the first stone," were amongst the richest things of last session; quite a new and improved edition of the Dublin basket-woman—"I know I am a rogue and a thief, but barring all that, I defy you to say black is the white of my eye!" Here is Roebuck, too; a clever little wasp, but who acquired decided reputation for *temper* in his management of the inquiry into those cases of compromise and bribery which made so much noise—much cry and little wool!

The House is becoming very thin?

Yes; you see it is seven o'clock; it will be almost empty till nine; after that hour the abstemious or the industrious make their appearance; and then the "diners-out." The ministers Sir Robert Peel, &c., are, however, seldom absent.

I think I know that fat, good-natured, rosy-looking man—Sir Robert Harry Inglis.

Right; but you cannot call him "fat" exactly, though he is undoubtedly "a round, fat, oily man of God," and, moreover, has "a roguish twinkle in his eye."

Do you throw doubt on his sincerity?

Not at all. His opinions are sharply defined, and boldly avowed. But, at the same time, the shape of his head is to me strongly indicative of casuistry, and I have seen his usually good-humoured face covered with a black frown. But if you want a "fat" man, in the sense, not of mere fleshly grossness, but of genuine jollity, look here: that is Humphrey, the present lord mayor of London. He was a standing dish of enjoyment during the dry discussions on the Tariff; and never failed to raise a fund of merriment by his affectionate solicitude on behalf of turbot and lobsters. Then, too, there was his pronunciation of the word "Fish"—which seemed to swim in melted butter in his mouth.

Behold another combination of contrasts—Sibthorp and Muntz—the one with his whiskers and moustachios; his "documents," of which his hands are generally full; and his jewellery, with which he sparkles: the other with a beard like Aaron's, trousers like tunnels, and a stick that would fell an ox. There is much shrewdness under the beard of Muntz, and not a little candour,

too: if he were shaved, and dressed like other men, he might not set the Thames on fire, but he would cease to be an oddity.

That tall man with the conspicuous aquiline nose is Lord Ashley, the eldest son of the Earl of Shaftesbury, so noted for his humane efforts on behalf of the labouring classes; that other, with the spectacles, for he is very near-sighted, is Lord Sandon, the eldest son of the Earl of Harrowby, but who, though a very respectable man, will never rival his father; and there are three bald-headed men together—Bernal, who was for a long time Chairman of Committees, and a very able chairman he made; Greene, the member for Lancaster, his successor in the office, a very assiduous man, but who, either from want of experience or tact, or both, does not come up to Bernal as a chairman; and Wallace, the member for Greenock, whose honesty of purpose is frequently interfered with by a blundering style and dogged obstinacy. Beyond them is that clever, gentlemanly young fellow, Milner Gibson, who labours under the disadvantage of having changed sides, but will "rise" if he takes care of himself; and walking out of the House is very tall Charles Buller, "so witty and so thin," he who went out to Canada with the late Earl Durham. Contrast with him little Sheil, in whose veins mercury still dances, and who can still scream out an electrical and rhetorical speech, in which the oddity of

manner is as remarkable as the style is startling. Not so O'Connell, in whose huge trunk the fire seems gradually burning out; while Sir John Cam Hobhouse seems destined to live on his past reputation. What Macaulay may hereafter be is in the book of fate; he gets remarkably stout, and has the air of an overgrown schoolboy: but Macaulay is a genius, and *ought* to leave a reputation behind him. Monckton Milnes is not a Macaulay, but he has a very pretty poetical taste—I mean that young man down there, with his black hair combed in one direction, and who when he speaks, talks as if he had liquorice in his mouth. Oh! mentioning poets and geniuses, there is Lord Francis Egerton—that tall, unobtrusive man—as amiable as he is rich, and as sensitively kind in his temper as he is wealthy and great. He is the brother of the Whig Duke of Sutherland, but is himself a moderate Tory. You know he translated the "Faust" of Göthe, and, like Pope with Homer, contrived to make his original very pretty, very melodious, besides stripping him of some of his impiety and some of his indecency. He exchanged his paternal surname of Leveson Gower for that of his maternal kinsman, the celebrated Duke of Bridgewater, whose great canal property he inherits.

Who is this rather nice-looking young fellow who has risen to answer some question about Ireland?

Lord Eliot, the son of Earl St. Germains, and nephew of the late Duke of Sutherland: he is a very amiable and a very worthy fellow. Whether it was luck or sagacity that led Peel to select that young nobleman as the successor of Lord Morpeth in the Irish Secretaryship, he could not have made a better choice. He is amiable, decided, enlightened, and determined. In speaking he is deficient in force and fulness, arising, probably, from that constitutional and retiring sensitiveness frequently associated with amiability. It, however, rather detracts from his *external* appearance, as occasionally Peel has to get up to hammer out some of his statements; a circumstance which has led some people to fancy him not quite "up" to the duties of his office. But look here—do you see that man crossing the floor?

Is it that little, square-built, short-necked, and somewhat bull-headed man who limps as he walks?

The same. It is "the old Commodore," the redoubted Sir Charles Napier.

How men do disappoint one so! Why, the bombarder of St. Jean d'Acre, he who ran over the tops of houses, and called to the Turks to "shake a reef out of their trousers," I took to be a very different looking man!

Yet if you observe Sir Charles, you will see that his weather-beaten frame ("hull" I suppose I should say) exhibits the determined and fearless

tar: he carries a light at his figure-head. He has taken the state of the navy under his particular care, and you will shortly hear him, in his broad Scotch, asking "the right honourable *birronet*" a question about it. His blunt *naïveté* is exceedingly amusing; and he never fails to raise a roar of laughter when he enlightens the House on such subjects as the inconveniences which a ship may suffer when troubled with "a foul wind."

Beside Napier, I see two other little men talking across the back of the seat which divides them; the one is prim in his appearance, the other smirking.

Ewart and Hawes. William Ewart is a man of elevated taste, of liberal sentiments, and of estimable private character; but you can see from his appearance that there is not even *basso rilievo* in his mental composition; all is smooth and shaven like a levelled green sward. The other man, Hawes, is possessed of ability, and makes rather a good speech, but detracts from his weight in the House by a bustling self-sufficiency, which leads him to intermeddle with too many things. He is a soap-manufacturer in Lambeth. But observe this man now "on his legs."

That, I should say, is a "dangerous" fellow! With his dark complexion, the harshly-solemn tones of his voice, and his somewhat appalling manner, one might think that the end of the world was come. Who is he?

Escott, the Duke of Buckingham's own man, and therefore an ultra-Tory. He is one of the members for Winchester. Yet, considering his position in relation to the Duke of Buckingham, for whom I believe he is agent, he has proved himself not only clever, but singularly honest. I do believe that if there were more Escotts in the House of Commons, it would be a great deal better for the country. He looks at subjects for himself, and would not sacrifice his convictions to any party interest whatever. By the way, though his whole aspect shows that he is no professional "joker of jokes," he split a good-humoured thing on the somewhat corpulent body of Mark Philips, the member for Manchester, which was as good-humouredly taken as given. It was in committee on the Railways Regulations Bill, and the subject was the locking the doors of carriages, and how people could best get out of an overturned one. Escott glanced at Mark Philips's rather portly frame—for he is a somewhat fine specimen of a Manchester man; and Mark repaid the allusion by telling how he was overturned in a stage-coach, and had employed the interval of prostration by proposing to sundry ladies and gentlemen who lay atop of him, that they should "toss up" for first chance of getting out. Escott, on another occasion, said a very droll thing, though he was quite unconscious of it, till startled by the laughter which burst around him. He was alluding to

the celebrated cases of compromise and bribery which Roebuck dragged into such temporary notoriety; and went on recounting them all—the member for this, the member for that, and the member for the other; until, getting tired of enumeration, he added with appalling solemnity—"and others whom I need not *run through*."

As you are on the subject of "serious faces," pray who is that serious, thin-faced man, who is stalking about like the ghost in Hamlet, though his personal appearance does not bespeak the noble Dane?

Sharman Crawford, a right-down, straight-forward, honest man, and who, if I may speak by comparatives, is not only as honest as Escott, but nearly as obstinate as Fielden, as impracticable as Wallace, as amiable as Eliot, and as kindly-hearted as Egerton. His abilities are rather above than below mediocrity; indeed he proved rather a tough opponent of O'Connell. But, from his personal appearance, you might infer him to be a dull, unimaginative north of Ireland small farmer.

You mentioned Fielden—is that the great Oldham manufacturer, the patron of Cobbett?

Yes, there he is, down there, he in black, whose thin skinny fingers remind one of Salvator Rosa's "Witch of Endor." He is very rich, very kind-hearted, very peculiar in his notions, and very obstinate in his disposition. He speaks with a Lancashire accent, and has a "marvellous small voice;" so small, that he is sometimes scarcely

heard a foot from where he is speaking. But when he has got a "crack" speech, respect for his character occasionally enforces a preternatural silence; and then some of the young wags of the house, in affected sympathy for the members and the reporters, will sing out "Wheesh!" in a way not calculated to promote gravity?

But is not all that very frivolous, and quite unworthy of a grave and reverend assembly?

Doubtless: but men are men; and look at the number of young members in the house, whose habits and associations are not calculated to develop a precocious gravity.

By the way, that sturdy clump of a man is Fox Maule, who was Lord John Russell's Under Secretary of State for the Home Department. He is the eldest son, you know, of Lord Panmure. His successor in the office is that tall young fellow now talking to Sir James Graham—Manners-Sutton, the eldest son of Lord Canterbury, who so long filled the Speakership. Do you observe that dandified personage passing along the gallery, who appears to be on the debatable ground between youth and age; his hair or his wig frizzled to "the very top of its bent," and with what appear to be gold spectacles on his nose? That is Emerson Tennent, the Belfast member, and one of the secretaries of the Board of Control—a clever man, but disfigured by literary foppery.

But the night would fail were we to sit here running through the catalogue of the 658 who constitute this house. How varied, too, is opinion amongst them! How diverse the leading and dominant ideas of many!—One thinks supremely on obtaining a grant for church extension; another as supremely and exclusively on the repeal of the Corn Laws. One prefers a fixed duty for protection; another a fixed duty for revenue; some would have Britain "the workshop of the world;" others say that the world will not let us become its workshop, and point to our vast COLONIAL EMPIRE as the draining field of our increasing and crowding population. But others say, that EMIGRATION is not wanted at all, if we would only cultivate our waste grounds, and give every labourer his "rood of land;" to which one or two reply, that our distresses are not produced by over-production or over-protection, but from a deficiency in the supply of paper money. Some would abolish the Poor Law Commission; others maintain the "Gilbert Unions;" some would go to the poll by way of the ballot; but many more prefer the old, manly, English, above-board method of going to the poll "by way of Dawlish." Some would enlarge the suffrage, as far, perhaps, as household suffrage, but not one would absolutely vote for the "Charter." While some are for shortening the duration of Parliaments down to four years, or three years, or one year, others would punish bribery and corruption,

the bribers and the bribed; and some of the staunchest advocates of an enlargement of the general franchise are the most vehement promoters of measures of particular disfranchisement. Some insist that State-Education should be under the control of the Church and the clergy; others that the State should give a much larger grant for the education of all classes without reference to religious opinions. A few are still to be found opposed to any grant to Maynooth; one, *at least*, insists on a rigid sanctification of the Sabbath, and one, *at least*, would, on the Sabbath, throw open the British Museum and the National Gallery. But, whatever contrariety of opinion may prevail, far, very far distant be the day when our House of Commons shall resemble, in its composition, the French *Assignat* Parliament, of which it was said:—

"The political and civil power of France is wholly separated from its property of every description; and of course neither the landed nor the monied interest possesses the smallest weight or consideration in the direction of any public concern. The whole kingdom is directed by *the refuse of its chicane*, with the aid of the bustling, presumptuous young clerks of counting-houses and shops, and some intermixture of young gentlemen of the same character in the several towns."

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